THE KEY TO THE STUDY OF ST. THOMAS

OLGIATI - ZYBURA

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To Fr. Clement
from the
Sisters of St. Joseph
St. Anthony School

WITHDRAWN

THE KEY
TO THE
STUDY OF ST. THOMAS

FROM THE ITALIAN OF

MSGR. FRANCESCO OLGIATI, D.D., PH.D.
Professor of Metaphysics at the University of the
Sacred Heart, Milan

WITH A LETTER OF APPROBATION FROM
HIS HOLINESS POPE PIUS XI

TRANSLATED
BY
JOHN S. ZYBURA

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THE HOLY FATHER'S APPROBATION OF THE ORIGINAL

SECRETARIAT OF STATE
OF HIS HOLINESS

The Vatican,
March 20, 1923

Illustrious Sir:

The Holy Father has gratefully accepted the homage of your work entitled, *L'Anima di San Tommaso,* and has entrusted to me the pleasant task of conveying to you his heartfelt thanks.

I likewise rejoice in being able to assure you that His Holiness was pleased to admire your fine and important publication and to express his deep satisfaction that to your preceding writings of an apologetic, moral, and literary character, you have added this new and powerful work of philosophic synthesis, which, while doing honor to Aquinas, illustrates his thought in contrast with modern errors. By this work you likewise honor the Catholic University of which you are such a highly esteemed professor, by always placing at the service of Christian culture and learning the fruits—by no means slight nor immature—of your vigorous studies and intelligence.

As a sure token of these sentiments of His sovereign good pleasure and benevolence the august Pontiff heartily imparts to you the Apostolic Blessing.

With assurances of highest esteem,
Yours most affectionately,

P. CARDINAL GASPARRI,
Secretary of State to
His Holiness Pope Pius XI.

TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

The revival of interest in Scholasticism in general, and Thomism in particular, is growing apace also among thinkers of the English-speaking world. This fact prompted the present rendition of a work hailed by competent critics as a luminous introduction to the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, in all its wealth and depth and vitality. Professor Olgiati's excellent monograph [1] gives us the master-key to every part of the imposing and harmonious structure of perennial ideas reared by the synthetic genius of the Prince of Scholastics.

A like unbiassed appraisal is made by the reviewer of the original, Professor A. E. Taylor, of Edinburgh University, in *Mind* (April, 1924, p. 217): "It is an exceptionally well-written and clear exposition of the notion of 'being' which lies at the root of the whole Thomist philosophy. I could warmly recommend it to any one who is trying to make himself acquainted with the central thought of Thomism and wishes for a lucid introduction."

[1] *L'Anima di S. Tommaso. Saggio Filosofico Intorno Alla Concezione Tomista* (Società Editrice "Vita e Pensiero," Milano, 1923).

The translation was submitted to the author and approved by him in the following terms:

"I am very grateful for your excellent translation of my philosophical essay on St. Thomas Aquinas. While deeply appreciating its marvelous fidelity to the original, I equally admire its discerning and elegant diction. My work purposes to be a key that may perhaps be of service to those who wish to open the portals of the medieval castle constructed by the immortal thinker, and subsequently to inspect it and eventually to take possession of it. Your fine translation aims to present this key to the English-speaking public. I heartily wish that it may lead to a deeper knowledge and love of the great genius who, like a sun, sheds such lustre on the thirteenth century."

J. S. Zybura

Colorado Springs, Colo.
Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, 1925.

INTRODUCTION

The Neo-Scholastic movement, so successfully launched by the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* of Leo XIII, has continued to flourish in various countries during these last decades, and has given a marvelous impetus to the earnest and profound study of St. Thomas Aquinas. Works like those of Sertillanges, Grabmann, Pègues, De Wulf, Baumgartner, Baeumker, Amato Masnovo, Garrigou-Lagrange, and many others, are a credit to the Catholic scholarship of today. The critical editions of the works of Aquinas, the diligent and accurate commentaries on his *Summa Theologica,* the systematic treatises and expositions of his doctrines in the domain of philosophy and theology alike, have gone on multiplying and so diffusing knowledge of Thomistic thought everywhere. A host of publications, for and against St. Thomas, has served to acquaint our contemporaries with the leading problems that occupied the soul of this great thinker.

In the greater part of these recent works on St. Thomas Aquinas one notes a preference for the analytic method. To be sure, this method had its merits. It was necessary to call attention to the

theses, the theories, the several parts of the system, just as when seeking to make a person known, we begin by describing his life with its most noteworthy facts and salient exploits, as well as its most minute episodes and many seemingly negligible details. Every point of the Thomistic conception is scrutinized, illumined, discussed. After the manner of hardy explorers, the students of St. Thomas, in their loving solicitude to trace its lines with due precision, have not overlooked a single outskirt of this hallowed ground.

Hitherto, however, the synthetic method has not received the attention it deserves. It would seem that after the painstaking and valuable researches along the way of analysis, not enough stress has been laid on pointing out to the men of our age the wonderful unity of the whole system. Frequently, even in otherwise eminent and learned works, the manifold doctrines engross the reader's attention without making him feel the beauty and vibration of the one and only spirit that breathes life into the whole. So it happens that many, especially among its opponents, imagine they have understood Thomism, the while as a matter of fact the *soul* of St. Thomas eludes their grasp.

The historic sense certainly never had such ardent panegyrists as to-day. And yet it does not abound in the matter-of-fact domain of practical

applications. One needs but to open certain handbooks of the history of philosophy to get a clear and painful impression of the downright lack of that indispensable insight which knows how to lay hold of unity in multiplicity—a unity, that is, which is living, dynamic, synthesizing the various phases of an idea or a system within the continuity of a gradual development. As a result, the history of philosophy becomes a collection of medallions, a whirling dance of conceptions that follow and chase one another and take their turn with changing fortune and capricious unreasonableness. It is true that the individual philosophers are portrayed with a wealth of biographical and bibliographical information, together with a list of the doctrines they champion in logic, metaphysics, ethics, and so on. But not even a question is put as to the link that binds the parts of the system together, as to the interpenetration that exists between the diverse theories. Too often we lose sight of the truth that *if small minds have many ideas and but little light,*—their consciousness may be likened to a market-place, where the most discordant thoughts pass to and fro, prating, shouting, exchanging places and grouping themselves with more or less disorder,—*great minds, instead, have but one idea with an abundance of light.*

The varied richness of the problems discussed,

the great number of the conclusions reached, the very efforts put forth to solve doubts, detract nothing from the unity of an organic system; they are rather the matter, the atoms to which *one single soul* knows how to give form and inspiration. There is one vital principle fashioning the manifold branches and the several parts of the one conception into a single organism. And it is the immanent logic of truth and error alike that causes philosophic systems to unfold themselves. Hence, to the eye that looks beneath the surface, they no longer appear as scattered bits of a casual explanation, but as gathered up within the progressive evolvement of the original germs.

The most profound Thomistic scholars, from Liberatore to Zigliara; from Lepidi to Garrigou-Lagrange, have understood with admirable insight that St. Thomas must needs be pondered after this fashion, that is, in the light of the most perfect systematic unity; and this all the more because he is the most daring synthetic genius known to pre-modern philosophy and, indeed, to all history. A synthesis, however, is inconceivable without one inspiring principle. And it is precisely the aim of this my modest effort to take up again and develop this method of our more eminent masters, so as to co-ordinate the partial truths of the Thomistic conception under a single idea, which is at once the *soul*

of St. Thomas and the supreme explanation of his immortal synthesis.

The focal center where all rays of the Thomistic system meet and from which they radiate, is *being,* as Cardinal Zigliara rightly pointed out. Whatever problems were faced by St. Thomas,—from the questions of metaphysics to those of theodicy, from the objectivity of knowledge to the relations between reason and faith,—all become clarified by a new light, adds Garrigou-Lagrange, and find their solution in a constant reduction to *being.* In the ontological order nothing exists or can exist that is not *being.* In the field of knowledge nothing is conceivable except through the mediation of *being. Being* is the idea capable of explaining that innermost harmony which, according to Rudolf Eucken, permeates the work of St. Thomas.

It has been said that by his *Summae* Aquinas reared a magnificent edifice toward the azure of the medieval heavens. We shall establish,—and the fact will be of paramount value from the viewpoint of history, philosophy, methodology,—that *being,* like a light flooding this edifice, enables us to note amid the sumptuous and artistic riches of this vast and imposing structure, only one architectonic line, worthy of the profound simplicity and consummate unity that characterize the genius of St. Thomas.

The Key to the Study of St. Thomas

CHAPTER I

THE PROGRAMME OF ST. THOMAS

In his *Geschichte des Idealismus* (Vol. III, p. 458) Otto Willmann likens the mind of St. Thomas "to a lake-basin that absorbs the waters streaming in from every quarter, lets sink whatever of rubbish they bring along, so that the surface forms a clear and tranquil mirror in which the blue vault of heaven is solemnly reflected." Another writer, while perusing the *Summa Theologica,* with the well-ordered arrangement of its three parts, 38 treatises, 631 questions, 3000 articles, and 10,000 objections, received the impression of strolling through a forest, in the calm of a serene dawn, where the singing of all the birds,—the voices of all preceding thinkers,—are blended into one harmonious whole.

That Thomism is a synthesis no one can doubt. In the encyclical cited, Leo XIII praised St. Thomas

because "he collected together, fashioned into one whole, and arranged in wonderful order the doctrines [of his illustrious predecessors] which had been like the scattered members of a body." On this point he agrees with Giovanni Gentile, who in his study on *I Problemi della Scolastica e il Pensiero Italiano,* recognizes Aquinas as "the greatest speculative intellect of the whole thirteenth century."

It is of supreme importance to call to mind the roots of this gigantic tree and the manner in which St. Thomas set about to synthesize the entire speculation that had flourished before his time.

1. The Roots of the Thomistic Synthesis

We must not imagine that the University of Paris, where St. Thomas taught for several years, or the age in which he lived, surrounded the efforts of the thinker with an atmosphere of tranquillity. The Thomistic synthesis grew up amid the keenest and most passionate agitations, which were in a measure the occasion of its birth.

The *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis,* for which the historian is indebted to Denifle and Chatelain, enables us to follow the rancorous conflicts between the professors from the secular clergy and those from the religious Orders,—conflicts interwoven with such fierce clashes between the students that the Holy See was obliged to intervene. In the

pages of Lemmens, *St. Bonaventure* we have the description of a veritable whirlwind let loose against the Dominicans and Franciscans, and a presentment of the difficulties that had to be overcome before St. Thomas and his saintly friend could be numbered among the teachers. It may well be that such storms are reducible to the squabbles of monks or the cross purposes of petty jealousies; but we feel that beneath the agitated surface of this tempestuous sea there is latent a formidable clashing of ideas. That was the time when one side and the other gave battle with the most intense eagerness. An incident in the life of Albert the Great is a case in point: after the death of his eminent pupil he does not hesitate, despite his advanced years, to face the long journey from Cologne to Paris for the purpose of defending certain theses of St. Thomas Aquinas. It was the age when the violent collision of currents indicated that the hour had come for a solution which would facilitate the definitive synthesis by tempering the just demands of all.

As Heitz aptly remarks in his *Essai Historique sur les Rapports entre la Philosophie et la Foi de Bérenger de Tours à Saint Thomas d'Aquin,* certain vigorous tendencies of thought could then be distinguished.

First of all, there was *Augustinian Platonism,* well disciplined for battle, jealous heir of the theories

of St. Augustine, who was acclaimed as the supreme master not only in theology, but also in philosophy. These followers of St. Augustine utilized only bits of Aristotle without, however, catching his spirit. Ehrle, in his book, *Der Augustinismus und der Aristotelismus in der Scholastik gegen Ende des XIII. Jahrhunderts,* has shown how deeply Augustinianism was rooted at this time. William of Auxerre, William of Auvergne, and St. Bonaventure, together with the Franciscan Order, were the champions of this movement, noted especially for its Neo-Platonic theory of knowledge and the divine illumination of the soul.

By the side of the Augustinians, says Heitz, we meet another group of a rather positive bent, devoted chiefly to the cultivation of the natural sciences, mathematics, and erudition. While professing sincere admiration for Aristotle as a naturalist, it followed the paths of Platonism when occupied with philosophico-theological problems. We may call this the current of the *Augustinian Empiricists.* Later, Roger Bacon became its most famous representative.

About 1260, a new doctrinal movement was inaugurated at the University of Paris. To understand it, one must not overlook the fact that the hitherto unknown books of Aristotle were now brought to light and began to be studied, more especially under the influence of Arabic culture,

which, among others, had had a famous Aristotelian commentator in Averroës. From this writer, who was their source of inspiration, a Parisian group, small in number, but very turbulent, called itself *Averroists*. Mandonnet's classic monograph on *Siger de Brabant et l'Averroisme Latin au XIII^e Siècle* gives an excellent exposition of this current of thought. Following in the footsteps of Averroes, Siger of Brabant and his friends sponsored doctrines contrary to such dogmas as free-will and Providence, and especially the theory of the numerical oneness of the intellectual soul in all men. Subsequently, to save themselves from ecclesiastical fulminations, they resorted to the subterfuge of the double truth.

Though condemned by the Church, this arbitrary interpretation of Aristotelianism brought about a veritable revolution in the world of culture. One could escape neither the powerful influence of this new spirit, nor the richness of the material it offered, nor the perfection of its scientific technique. The situation, as Seeberg says, was similar to that following the invention of new methods and weapons of defense: henceforth no one can make war without enlisting them in his service.

Amid the clashing of so many conceptions, there were some who cloaked their ignorance with the mantle of mysticism and hurled their missiles of scorn against philosophy, deeming it useless and even

harmful to religion. They were the men whom Albert the Great described, by a phrase not at all complimentary, as *bruta animantia, blasphemantes in iis quae ignorant.*

Others had recourse to the dangerous policy of condemnation. A provincial council of Sens, reconvened at Paris in 1210, had struck a blow at the *Physics* and *Metaphysics* of the Stagirite. In 1231, Gregory IX moderated the verdict and announced a provisional prohibition until these books should be corrected. In 1277, these measures had their aftermath in the condemnation hurled against some theses of St. Thomas by Stephen Tempier, bishop of Paris, and by Robert Kilwardby, archbishop of Canterbury. Such a policy, however, could have no success worthy of note.

It was *Christian Aristotelianism* that saved the situation. Initiated at Cologne by Albert of Bollstaedt, it was perfected by his great pupil St. Thomas. The former *utilized* Aristotle, as Sertillanges happily puts it in his excellent monograph on *Saint Thomas d'Aquin,* and united him to Plato. The latter, absorbing all the vital germs of Augustinianism, planting himself on the same Aristotelian ground with the Averroists, having the greatest respect for experience and the demands of true mysticism, feeling profoundly the encyclopedic and popularizing preoccupations of his teacher Albert, *assimilated* Aristotle and

summed up in an organic synthesis the results of all preceding speculation in philosophy and theology.

Working with a scientific method and guided by strictly objective criteria, with the clearly stated programme of "not allowing himself to be led by sympathy or aversion for anyone whose opinions he used or refuted, but by the certainty of truth," with the tenacity of a calm and lucid thinker, without lyrical digressions or sentimental flights, Thomas Aquinas succeeded in achieving,—as De Ruggiero acknowledges in his *Storia della Filosofia,*—"that type of pure science, admirable for its transparent logic and for the organic connection of its parts, which his Greek predecessor was the first to found."

2. The Aspiration of St. Thomas

In the third volume of his *Dogmengeschichte,* Adolph Harnack has brought out in strong relief the fact that, while Scholasticism was rounding out its synthesis in the field of thought, the Church was engaged in the same task in the various concerns of human life. This is quite true, and it points to the outstanding characteristic of the Middle Ages.[1] In vain do we look for it in other centuries, in which we find none of that magnificence of systematic conceptions or organic visions. In that epoch

[1] Cfr. Maurice De Wulf, *Philosophy and Civilization in the Middle Ages* (Princeton University Press, 1922). (Tr.)

everything appeared as forming a part of this rich and living unity. And if St. Thomas is the representative of these times, it is because of that synthesis which constituted his unceasing preoccupation and steadfast programme. He synthesized *all the thought that had gone before;* he embraced *all reality,* natural and supernatural; he achieved a happy harmony *in his own life.* In a word, St. Thomas was the synthetic genius *par excellence.*

As in Aristotle, so in him, the historic sense was vivid. In *De Anima* (I, 1. 2) he bids us "give ear to the opinions of the ancients, whatever they may be, because of a twofold usefulness to be derived therefrom: to make our own whatever of good they have said, and to shun what they have said mistakenly." And in his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (III, lib. 1) he says: "The examination of preceding authors is necessary for clearing up problems and solving doubts. As in a trial no one can pronounce sentence without having heard the reasons of both sides, so it is necessary that he who is occupied with philosophy hear the reasons and doubts adduced to the contrary by the adversaries, in order to form a strictly scientific judgment."

This criterion St. Thomas not only stated, but loyally followed. In his works the historian of philosophy can discover not only treasures of in-

formation and ideas, but above all the method to be followed. Besides, the very technique of Scholastic exposition with the *Videtur quod,* that is, the statement of hostile theories, was favorable to that orderly procedure which in St. Thomas Aquinas took on an exquisiteness quite remarkable for those times. Thus, for his Aristotelian studies he was not satisfied with the Latin version made from the Arabic: to have a reliable text of Aristotle, he prevailed on William of Moerbeke, his friend and confrère, who was a good linguist, to make a Latin version of the Stagirite's works on physics, metaphysics, and ethics, directly from the Greek. And this was done,—as he notes in *De Coelo et Mundo* (I, lib. 22), not merely in order to ascertain what others had thought, but to get at the truth. He well understood that the historical statement of problems is an indispensable requisite for the attainment and progress of truth.

Hence, the synthesis of the conceptions of the past must have occurred quite spontaneously to his mind. In the process of actualizing it, he ever maintained an admirable serenity and a state of mind that at times urged him to excessive benignity in interpreting different thinkers. And so he who should have been an antagonist of Augustinian Platonism, not only quoted St. Augustine with the

greatest veneration,[1] but also, as von Hertling has noted, took over from the writers opposed to him a goodly number of important doctrines (for instance, that in God thought is identified with being, that He alone can create, that conservation is a continued creation), and accepted the theories of exemplarism, of Providence, of miracle, of evil, of the immateriality of the soul, and so on. Not only did he seek to cover with all possible courtesy the exaggerated spiritualism of the bishop of Hippo, so as to attenuate its opposition to the peripatetic doctrines, but when treating of Aristotle, he did not hesitate to take a contrary position on questions in which he did not find him consonant with truth. Fully independent in judgment, equal, nay superior in intellectual acumen and comprehension to the greatest geniuses of humanity, he discovered new paths of truth and was not afraid of novelty in his synthetic work. This is shown clearly by his accurate biographer, William of Tours, who found in his teaching "new questions," a "new and lucid method of research and scientific solutions," "new arguments" in his demonstrations, "new doctrines and principles," by means of which he solved doubts and difficulties. It is true that Thomas took the material for his synthesis from all preceding philosophers;

[1] In the first part of the *Summa Theologica* the writings of St. Augustine are cited 550 times. (Tr.)

but it is equally true, as will be amply shown, that he endowed his work with a genuine and luminous originality.

This work not only recapitulated and perfected the results of the culture hitherto achieved, but was extended so as to embrace all reality. The relations between metaphysics and dogma, faith and philosophy, the natural and the supernatural, were definitively and lucidly determined by St. Thomas, inasmuch as the two domains,—especially in his two *Summae*,—were harmoniously blended together, while remaining formally distinct.

A modern philosopher, Rudolf Eucken, though hostile to Neo-Thomism, well delineates this guiding concept of Aquinas when he writes in his *Lebensanschauungen grosser Denker* that, for St. Thomas, "every degree of reality has its own law. Even the lowest grade must have the power to develop according to its particular character, without being disturbed by the higher ones. As there is a special kingdom of nature, so there is a recognition of the autonomous task of natural knowledge; and the appeal to God in special scientific questions is condemned as a refuge of ignorance (*asylum ignorantiae*). But every inferior grade must needs confine itself within its own limits, and not presume to intrude upon the higher spheres. The kingdom of nature merely sketches what the kingdom of

grace, the world of Christianity, confirms and develops. . . . Hence autonomy does not exclude subordination, and the division of the domains is completed by their being brought into harmony within a more comprehensive totality. Then, above the kingdom of historical Revelation there towers another grade: the immediate union with God . . . the kingdom of glory. . . . This gradation seems to have solved the problem of reconciling all human finalities and of recognizing for every domain its proper law, without endangering the unity and order of the whole. . . . This work called for a truly extraordinary power of synthesis and an equally great ability in the use of logic. In this Thomas attained true greatness."

Another factor aided St. Thomas to reach such heights: he realized in his own life the harmony visioned in his speculation. The sacrifice of his entire self to truth was not in vain. The thoughtful recollection as part of a holy life, the prolific inspirations of prayer, the unruffled tranquillity of meditation, the lectures of Albert the Great, the absorbing interest of teaching and disputation,—all these factors contributed to make him impervious to the trivial happenings of every-day life, and enabled him to soar boldly into a higher world, where the sweep of his vision could embrace the vastest horizons.

One of his biographers, Guglielmo da Tocco, relates that St. Thomas one day, while sitting at table with St. Louis, King of France, wholly absorbed in his own thoughts, quite forgot the illustrious personages with whom he was dining. All at once he struck the table and exclaimed: "At last I have found the decisive argument against the Manicheans!" This incident, says Grabmann in his fine essay on *Thomas von Aquin,* induced the superiors of the Dominican Order to give him Reginaldo da Piperno as a companion, to take care of him and to see to it that he did not forget to partake of the necessary food and drink, or neglect the demands of practical life.

Study and the disinterested investigation of truth, —such was the supreme purpose of "the good friar Thomas," as Dante calls him in the *Convivio.* Through this complete sacrifice of self he became the "Prince of Scholastics" and remains to-day the Master of the Catholic world. In him the immaculate purity of soul, which Plato required as a condition *sine qua non* for attaining wisdom, was joined to keenness and depth of mind. The writer of the *Contra Gentiles* was capable of composing the Office for the Feast of *Corpus Christi* and of presenting to the Church those sublime Eucharistic hymns which are still in use in our liturgy. This philosopher and theologian was a saint, and a great saint.

This ardent admirer of Aristotle, having been stricken by illness on his way to the Council of Lyons, died, surrounded by monks, at Fossanuova, —died commenting on the *Canticle of Canticles!* The *programme of the synthesis* in culture, in the grades of reality, in life, has never been more splendidly realized. Henceforth one will search history in vain for a man who in this respect can rival Thomas Aquinas.

3. Origins of the Life-Giving Idea

The simple and inexhaustibly prolific idea of which St. Thomas availed himself to vivify his conception, and which breathed life into the rich materials he had collected was, as I have stated, the idea of *being*. In the following pages this assertion will be amply substantiated.

There is one point, however, which is too easily passed over, even by many of those who recognize in *being* the life-giving idea of Thomism. And it is this: *being,* as conceived by St. Thomas, is the upshot of all the speculation from the beginning of Greek philosophy down to his own time. It is the last flower on the plant of pre-modern thought.

When the Greeks pass on from the mythological explanation of the universe to the scientific vision of it, the problem which at once confronts them is that of *being,* or reality. And this is likewise one

of the first concepts to receive elaboration; indeed, it is the fundamental concept, inasmuch as *becoming,* with the Greeks, always concerns that which exists, and for them the act of knowing is never endowed with a creative power;—it does but mirror being, or seeks to do so.

But for the Ionic, Pythagorean, and Eleatic school, for Heraclitus, Empedocles, Leucippus, and Democritus, for Anaxagoras himself, the reality to be explained is nature, the natural object, and recourse is had to air, water, fire, atoms, νοῦς, with a view to solving the problem.

At first glance it would seem that with the Sophists the orientation of philosophic research undergoes a complete change. Sceptical doubt culminates in the total negation of truth, of ethics, of religion. For the σοφοί *being* is unknowable. Man, according to a phrase of Protagoras, is the measure of all things. Sophistic dialectic and eristic buffooneries seem about to overthrow, for good and all, the setting of the problem of being; for, given the subjectivity of our perceptions, the knowledge of reality becomes impossible.

It cannot be denied that the Sophists brought about a displacement of the center of gravity in speculation. From the investigation of nature philosophy passes to the examination of the subject, but it goes no further than its surface, and loses it-

self in the whirlwind of the external phenomena of the ego.

It was then necessary to probe deeper. The subject is not to be considered merely from the side of its surface life. And Socrates comes with the admonition: "Know thyself." Here we have a programme that plants itself within the very position of the Sophists, but progresses in the direction of the interior life. This life, when accurately examined, yields to Socrates the joy of his great discovery, the *concept,* the basis of science and knowledge, as the norm available to all, overcoming and disproving the relativism of Gorgias and Protagoras.

Socrates divided things into two classes—divine and human. And it must be admitted that, as regards the first (τὰ δαιμόνια), the formation of the world, being in itself, he is like unto the Sophists in pronouncing the hopeless verdict of *ignoramus,* scarcely softened by the feeble ray of δόξα, or opinion. Science (ἐπιστήμη) concerns itself only with human things (τα ἀνθρώπεια), that is to say, with what is just and unjust, pious and impious, beautiful and ugly,—in a word, with the ordinary ways and affairs of man. Here it is that Socrates sees the *concept* sprouting as something constant, immutable, universal, asserting its sovereignty, bringing the will under its sway, and en-

abling men to found their lives and conduct on absolute truth.

Such a position, precious though it be for its recognition of the validity of thought in itself, does not allow, at least in theory, of the study of being. In reality, however, Socrates himself made use of the concept also in the field he had defined as inaccessible; and though failing to solve with it "the geometry of fleas" (such was the reproach of an adversary), he none the less discussed the problem of the finality of the universe.

With Plato the Socratic concept takes on the form of *idea,* and the Platonic idea not only hails conceptual knowledge as absolute and perfect knowledge, it not only extends the reign of the concept—hitherto confined within the limits of human conduct, —to all reality, but it inaugurates metaphysics, the metaphysics of ideas, to which it attributes not only logical, but also ontological validity, and calls forth the well-known dualisms,—so acute and embarrassing,—in the domain of knowledge, of ethics, and especially of metaphysics.

Two worlds were now facing each other: on the one hand was the world of ideas, of οὐσία, of perfect reality, of the universal existing as such; on the other, the world of "becoming," of relativity, of changeableness, of imperfection, of γένεσις, of the individual.

For Plato, ideas are the true being,—ideas not atomistically separated, but organically connected "by bonds stronger than the diamond." Furthermore, for him all ideas are essential determinations of the idea of being, whose internal principle of specification is the idea of *the good,* the sun of the world of the invisible, the fountainhead of all being.

In vain does Plato seek to bridge the abyss that separates these two worlds. The universal never makes contact with the particular, but remains an independent prototype. The theory of separated ideas ruthlessly splits reality into two camps; it throws a sinister light on one part of it and reduces it to an empty shadow, imperfect and worthy of contempt.

The Aristotelian revolution consists in bringing about a union of the two worlds. Aristotle vigorously combats the doctrine of separated ideas. He makes the ideas come down from heaven to earth, and puts them into the very current of reality. For Aristotle the universal is immanent in the individual: ideas operate in things as forces directing the process of "becoming" and making it intelligible or rational. The Socratic concept, after evolving into the Platonic idea, thus becomes,—in contraposition to matter,—the Aristotelian *form,* the soul of the whole philosophy of the Stagirite.

Every part, or better, every member of the Aristo-

telian system, is to be regarded from the viewpoint of entelechy as the master-key to the entire edifice. The doctrine of the form explains for Aristotle the object of metaphysics and the causes of being, that is to say, it solves the *problem of being.* "Becoming," or the passage from potency to act in matter, is to be interpreted in function of the form, because that which is produced anew is a form, and that by means of which a new form is produced is the activity of another form. The same holds true of finality, inasmuch as intrinsic finality is identified with the substantial form of the specific type. Extrinsic finality implies the hierarchy and the relations between the forms. Transcendent finality implies the pure form, perfect, immobile, and moving all other forms.

In this conception the real becomes intelligible, or, in the language of the moderns, rational. Our knowledge is a knowledge of forms and acquired through forms,[1] and for that reason grasps the universal in the individual, the intelligible in the sensible, the law in the fact, the reason and possibility of being in being. Here, then, we have a science of being as being, and of the principles of being,—in other words, metaphysics as the science of reality, to which the pre-Socratic philosophers had turned their

[1] Cfr. *Eidologie, oder Philosophie als Formerkenntnis,* von Dr. Joseph Geyser (Freiburg i. B., 1924). (Tr.)

investigations. It is the science that has been achieved through a slow but uninterrupted development, across the crisis of Sophistic scepticism and the contributions of Socrates and Plato. It is no longer merely the dialectic of the concept, or the metaphysics of distant ideas exulting on inaccessible summits; it is, at last, the very metaphysic of being.

However, in this Aristotelian metaphysic, dominated by the conception of the form, there remains a field of being not yet cleared up. It is that of uncreated matter, of the individual, with its principle of individuation in matter, and of history. With St. Augustine new progress is made. Through the idea of *truth,* the synthesis of all Augustinian speculation, every part of reality becomes intelligible. Primal matter, too, as *created* by God, the individual and history as being under the influence of Providence and despite the difficulties raised by the problem of evil,—in a word, everything that exists is a reflection of the eternal Truth. Nature, ideas, things and their essential reasons, the single beings, the vicissitudes of history,—all are flooded by this light.

Dazzled by the fascinating vision that flashes on him in his wonderful process of interiorizing, Augustine, in his ascent of the mount of Truth, would fain follow the debatable path that rises from

the true to the affirmation of the real, and finds in logical truth itself the proof of the existence of ontological reality, of God and creatures.

This is not the place to discuss such a procedure, which may have aided the great Doctor to throw his Christian principle into stronger relief. I confine myself to pointing out the immense distance that had been traversed.

From the pre-Socratic philosophers down to St. Augustine, *being* and *the science of being* appear in one splendid development, which in this brief sketch can be but very imperfectly presented.[1] It would be absurd to break this continuous progress. It would be contrary to the philosophical spirit to forget that, from the nascent investigation of reality by the earliest philosophers, right on to Augustinianism, there is a continuity of thought from which it is not permissible to prescind. He who would relegate the *concept* of Socrates, the *idea* of Plato, the *form* of Aristotle, the *truth* of St. Augustine to separate compartments,—as though they were not phases of one and the same development,—would show that he did not understand the history of

[1] The development of the idea of being in ancient philosophy will form the subject of a future work, in which I shall show the unity of this developing process from the pre-sophists down to St. Thomas, as against the opinion of those who divide it into a Platonic and an Aristotelian current.

philosophy. In like manner *he* would miss the truth who failed to note how all preceding philosophy was a preparation for the Thomistic system.

Being, according to St. Thomas, is the highest peak reached by pre-modern thought. This simple word "being" is a germinal idea, the fruit of a long and slow preparation, the life-giving principle of a new organism. St. Thomas achieved a synthesis, not only because of the material he put under contribution; the very soul of his system bears within itself all that had inspired every philosophic genius down to his day. To comprehend the *being* of St. Thomas in the full richness of its meaning, it is not enough to have recourse to the enlightening comments of his limpid and profound Latin; one must also keep in view the historical development of philosophical thought in what was its most essential element, which, like a flaming torch, lights the way of every great thinker and is entrusted by him to his successor, who is to replenish it and make its flame more brilliant, more beautiful, more intense.

CHAPTER II

"BEING" IN THE METAPHYSICS OF ST. THOMAS

BEING, to the mind of St. Thomas, is not something mysterious or obscure. On the contrary, it is what our mind knows best and grasps immediately in everything.

As soon as our intellect is aroused and comes in contact with reality, the very first object of our knowledge, the first concept we form,—no matter what the thing that has impinged on our senses,—is that of being, of something that is (τὸ ὄν). We have here an initial, imperfect, confused notion, telling us next to nothing about the constituent elements of the real, yet, for all that, comprising them all, down to their last determinations. Moreover, if we penetrate its profound meaning, if we reach down to the true reasons of being, this notion, in the most universal and analogical unity of its content, becomes ever more clear and distinct; it appears *"quasi quoddam seminarium totius cognitionis sequentis,"* a kind of nursery of all subsequent cognition, and enables us to rise to the very summit of intellectual

life, to the perfect Being, and thence to descend again to all other beings.

In the order of knowledge, then, our thought is enclosed between two points. At the point of departure we have an initial cognition of being; at the point of arrival we find nothing else than a perfected cognition of this same being. In this effort of elaboration and attainment I can add nothing to the concept of being that is not already implicitly contained in it. To every generic idea I can add a specific difference not included in the genus; not so, when the notion of being is in question: though expressing what was not formally signified before, I never succeed in stating or coming upon something that is not being. It was on this that St. Thomas founded his doctrine of the analogy of being. The notion of being, he argued, is not *univocal,* it is not a genus, it does not indicate realities formally identical; and yet, neither does it signify things entirely different: it is not an *equivocal* idea. It is *analogical,* inasmuch as God and creatures, substance and accidents, in a word, the most dissimilar realities, agree in this that they are beings.

The same is found to hold good in the ontological order.

"Quidquid est, si quid est, ens est,"—all that exists, if existence, is being, say the followers of St. Thomas in unison with their master. In all

reality, actual or possible, present, past, or future, discover, if you can, something to which this idea of being does not apply. Strain your imagination to the utmost to find something in the domain of reality that is not being. Impossible! We can, of course, distinguish the various grades of being; we can conceive what universally follows upon all being. But we cannot even imagine something that is not being because the principle of contradiction stands in the way. Whether we turn back on our consciousness and study ourselves, or direct our attention to sensible reality, or by way of reasoning come to know "separated substances" (angels) and God,—in every grade of reality we find being, something that is, something that has existence.

Here, too, the notion of being presents to us all reality united in one single embrace. From Being by essence proceed all other beings. In the cognitive process we take our point of departure from being imperfectly grasped to reach a more elaborate idea. The contrary process prevails in the ontological order: here we must start from the most perfect Being in order to explain everything that exists or can exist.

The foregoing suffices to point out the motive for the very numerous passages in the works of St. Thomas,—from the *De Veritate* to the *De Ente et Essentia,* from the two *Sumnae* to his commentary

on the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle,—where this primacy of being in our intellect and in things existing or possible is asserted. "Being is what the intellect conceives first, as something most known and into which it resolves all conceptions" (*De Veritate,* qu. I, art. 1). "The intellect naturally knows being and whatever essentially belongs to being as such, and on this cognition the knowledge of first principles is founded. . . . The formal object of the intellect is being, just as color is the formal object of vision. . . . That under which is comprehended whatever the intellect knows . . . is nothing else than being" (*Contra Gentiles,* II, c. 83). "What is grasped first of all is being, the understanding of which is included in every apprehension" (*Summa Theologica,* I, II, qu. 92, art. 2). These quotations could easily be multiplied.

1. The Science of Being as Such

Given this fundamental conviction, St. Thomas had of necessity to prize metaphysics, or "first philosophy" as wisdom *par excellence,* as the culminating point of knowledge, precisely because, in the definition of Aristotle, this is the science of being as such.

Dr. Grabmann is quite exact when he insists that "St. Thomas Aquinas is pre-eminently a metaphysical thinker. The profound grasp, further develop-

ment, expert and comprehensive use of the metaphysics of Aristotle,—also for the penetration of the theological content,—is his outstanding achievement. His teacher, Albert the Great, had paved the way for this work. E. Rolfes calls St. Thomas 'the greatest commentator of Aristotle's *Metaphysics.*' The metaphysical genius of Aquinas thoroughly dominates his great systematic works; it reveals itself more especially in his teaching on God, but is evident also in the strictly theological questions on grace, the Incarnation, and the Sacraments. . . . It was surely not mere chance that the pupils of St. Thomas showed a predilection for metaphysical problems."

All this, I repeat, is very true. But the innermost reason thereof is to be found in the soul of Thomism. He who determined on being as the inspiring principle of his system, was led by a logical necessity to give preference to the science of being as such, and to place it above mathematics, which is concerned with reality as subject to quantity; above physics, which studies the real in the function of motion; above every science whatsoever that deals with reality from some determined and specific point of view.

Whether the term "being" signifies the thing, the *res, essentia, quidditas* that is endowed with existence, or whether it means existence itself,—*actus*

essendi, the act of existing,—to speak of being in metaphysics is always tantamount to speaking of reality, that is, of that which exists or can exist.

The science of being, then, having gained the first principles of all being, is applied to every other branch of knowledge concerned with real being, actual or possible. Wherever reality exists, there metaphysics asserts its sway. It reaches out to all beings, and not even Natural Theology is possible outside of it, because God, too, is being,—indeed, He is the Supreme Being. It dominates all the sciences and mocks him who would pretend to repudiate it. In his commentary on the fourth book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics,* St. Thomas calls attention to the fact that metaphysics is a branch of knowledge indispensable even for those who would ignore or actually despise it. Unwittingly all men are constrained to occupy themselves with metaphysics. For metaphysics treats of reality and the fundamental principles of reality, that is, of being. Hence he who wished to withdraw from its influence, would commit a sort of intellectual suicide. He would have to say: "I am speaking, but I am not concerned with reality; I am merely amusing myself with chimeras." No one can be interested in the real and prescind from metaphysics, which investigates the supreme laws of the real. No one can delude himself with having understood St.

Thomas and sincerely repeat the saying that "the tiniest pebble, a single fact, is worth more than a mountain of syllogisms." In the view of metaphysics such a statement is proof positive of a total lack of speculative acumen. It is not a question of having being on one side and the syllogism on the other; but it is metaphysics that gives us being, reality, interpreted and comprehended. The difference between man and the animal, when they face reality, is not based on the material nature of sensation and verification; but consists in this, that the animal observes and does not understand; whereas man proceeds from the observation of reality to the explanation thereof, he rises from being to the reasons of being.

In this St. Thomas was a loyal follower of Aristotle. He is a peripatetic more on account of the mental habit of research and meditation than for the sum-total of the doctrines he has taken over and embodied in his system. The Stagirite had a vivid sense of reality; from experience and observation he rose to the philosophical and metaphysical interpretation of experiential data, thereby tempering and welding the demands of empiricism and idealism. In like manner, St. Thomas, as the faithful continuator of the Greek master, always begins with the positive observation of things, and then proceeds to investigate their nature, causes, and

laws. And the merit of this method cannot be calmly appraised except by one who reflects that in the thirteenth century quite a different road was followed by the Augustinian school.

2. The Conquest of Being

It cannot be denied that the mind that ponders the writings of St. Augustine is deeply stirred and enrapt by admiration. His metaphysics of truth fills us with enthusiasm. The world takes on a value quite different from that with which the common man invests it. Everything proclaims and chants the beauty of that Truth of which earthly being is but a pallid ray. And yet, the mind does not rest tranquil, the Augustinian process for compassing truth does not satisfy it. The main line of the great Doctor's reasoning,—which mounts to the supreme Truth and self-existent Being from the eternal, immutable, and perfect truths existing in our mind,—dazzles indeed, but does not convince and is anything but safe. Christianity, with its concept of Creation and Providence, had furnished Augustine with the idea of the ontological identity of being with truth and goodness, but Plato and Plotinus, from whom he drew his inspiration, had not mapped out for him a safe and solid road for reaching that summit; rather, they had indicated a misleading path. From the idea,

from the notion of truth, Augustine wished to attain to Being. By the soarings of his heart and his mystic genius he sought to make up for the defects of the road upon which he had set out.

The spell which the interiorizing process of Augustine always casts over the reader was soon broken. In vain should we look for it in the heat of the medieval struggle for and against the *eternal truths*. Sertillanges thus sums up these conflicts: Augustine had said that "nothing is more eternal than the law of the circle; nothing more eternal than that two and three make five. If you destroy the things that are true, truth itself will remain, added Anselm. Is it perhaps not reasonable to assert that universals exist outside of time and space? And what is more universal than truth? Of what is true to-day it was always true that it would be so, and will ever be true that it was so. Even supposing that truth had a beginning, or that it perishes, nevertheless there always remains this: that in the past or supposed future there would be no truth, and this itself would be a truth,—so true is it that truth is independent of everything and that it is eternal." Therefore Truth exists, that is to say, God exists. From the notion of *truth* the transition was made to the affirmation of Being. In this manner was realized the great programme: "Do not go outside (thyself). Truth abides in the in-

terior man. . . . And if thou shouldst find thyself changeable, go beyond thyself."

Such reasoning, proper to the metaphysics of truth, entrained certain consequences as to the origin of ideas.

For Plato, Plotinus, the Neo-Platonists, Augustine, and the Franciscan school, sensation played no great part in the attainment of truth. The universal, eternal, and immutable character of the latter could not, in their view, derive its origin from the individual, temporal, contingent things of sense. The external object may arouse the intellectual soul to understand, but it can do no more. Between sense perception and intellectual knowledge there exists merely an extrinsic relation, i. e., that of simple juxtaposition.

If that were so, the activity of the cognitive faculty would acquire a great and essential importance in the genesis of human knowledge. Our intellect would not be of a passive and receptive character, but the soul would draw up truth from the depths of its substance, or it would reach it with the intervention of divine aid, or through the medium of innate ideas, or by that divine illumination of minds so dear to St. Augustine. Such were the consequences of proceeding along that perilous road.

St. Thomas with his metaphysics of being struck out in the opposite direction.

In the first place, he refutes all these hypotheses. From the notion of truth one cannot pass on to the affirmation of being, because truth implies and presupposes being, inasmuch as it is an agreement between being and intellect. If there were no being, there would be no truth. And it is futile to say that then, at least this last assertion would still be a truth. It would not, for this is a product of our fancy which on the one hand imagines that neither object nor subject exists, and on the other, in the very act of excluding presupposes them. The law of the circle could not be called a truth if there were no mind to think it because truth is an agreement between that law and some intelligence. If the latter does not exist, neither does the agreement. "Even if the human intellect did not exist," we read in *De Veritate* (qu. I, art. 2), "things would still be called true in reference to the Divine Intellect, given that the existence of such an intellect were known. But if both intellects were considered as not existing,—an impossible supposition, —then no ground whatever for truth would remain," —precisely because *truth* is nothing else than *being in its relation to the intellect.*

As to the universals, they prescind from time and

space because they are abstracted from things and their individual motion. But what would become of this abstraction if there were no mind to perform it? Eternity and immutability of truth are negative notes; and, given an eternal intelligence, there will also be an eternal truth. Hence we must needs prove the existence of the former if we are to admit the latter. From being we arrive at truth, but from truth we cannot *a priori* mount to being because truth presupposes the being to be proved.

It is, therefore, unnecessary to admit innate ideas in the human mind. Further evidence for this is found in the potential character,—established by consciousness itself,—of our cognitive faculties, lower as well as higher. Our intellect is a passive power and contains nothing except what it has inferred from the senses. *"Nihil est in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu."* In the *Summa Theologica* (Ia, qu. 12, art. 12) St. Thomas clearly teaches that "our knowledge begins with sense. Hence our natural knowledge can go as far as it can be led by sensible things. And in his opusculum *De Principio Individuationis* he says that "the senses are the foundation and origin of human knowledge." Sensible reality acts on the understanding by means of the "phantasm" or the image from which the "active intellect" forms "the impressed intelligible species."

This, by its action on the "possible intellect," gives rise to the "expressed species," *verbum mentis*, or idea.

In the cognitive process, therefore, the point of departure are the data of sensibility, and the concept is reached through the elaboration effected by the intellectual power. The sensible datum is determinate and individual, but the intellect strips it of its individualizing characters and seeks the reason of being, the essential constituent of the thing, the invariable and absolute essence. In this way our mind penetrates to the very heart of reality, *"ingreditur ad interiora rei,"* says St. Thomas in *Contra Gentiles* (IV, c. II), and it is unnecessary to postulate special divine illumination in order to explain the genesis of higher truths. It is enough to admit that God is the exemplary cause of all things and that our intellect participates in the divine light. Things are knowable in the eternal ideas of God, not as if there existed a light through which and in which we formally know the truth, but in the sense that all things are imitations of divine ideas, that is, of the absolute Being.

As a consequence, St. Thomas was prepared to combat any attempt to prove absolute Being *a priori*, on the basis of the concept we have of Him. We do not reach God except through contingent beings,

perceived by the senses and elaborated by intelligence. The famous ontological proof of Anselm found a decided opponent in Aquinas.

St. Anselm tried to prove the existence of God by starting from the idea we have of Him. In his *Proslogium* he argues as follows against an atheist: In our intellect there exists the idea of a being than which no greater can be conceived. Now, that which is so great that we can think of nothing greater, cannot exist in the intellect alone, because then the being that exists both in the mind and in reality would evidently be more perfect. Therefore, the being than which nothing greater can be conceived, exists also in reality.

In his *Commentary on the Sentences,* in *De Veritate,* in the *Summa Contra Gentiles,* and in the *Summa Theologica* St. Thomas rejects this argument. He admits that if God is thought of as a most perfect being, He must of necessity be *thought* of as existing and cannot be *represented* as not existing. But from this it would only follow that God exists in the human intellect and not that He exists in reality (*in rerum natura*), unless it could be shown that in reality, too, there exists some being than which nothing greater can be conceived.

In the question, then, of the *genesis* of our knowledge St. Thomas does not hesitate to declare the Augustinian-Platonic procedure inadmissible. His

point of departure is not the idea, or truth, but the fact that being is perceived by the senses. The senses, it is true, do not grasp the essence or the existence of things because they are blind as to these objects and as to the intrinsic, extra-subjective reality of the object; but they present an effect of reality to the intellect. With this material as a basis, we affirm the reality of beings, their essential notes, their contingent character, and finally, the existence of a Being that is the ultimate reason of all others and contains within itself the reason of its own existence.

The gradual conquest of being in the domain of knowledge is what we find in the Thomistic doctrine of the genesis of ideas. We are beings, the material objects around us are beings. Through sensation we make contact with these beings. With the intellect we affirm them, understand the reason of being, ascend from contingent to necessary being, from material to immaterial beings, from the lowest grade of being to the highest. Thus Metaphysics attains to a concept of the ego, of the world, and of God, by starting from experience, without, of course, aprioristically excluding psychical facts.

This is the reason, as Professor Zamboni notes, why the Aristotelian-Thomistic school divides metaphysics into two parts: (1) general metaphysics or ontology, which treats of being and its causes; and

(2) special metaphysics, which deals with the soul and God, and is the application of ontology to immaterial beings. "Metaphysics has for its proper object, not the spiritual world, but the world of experience. Having formed its concepts from this world, and gained its principles, it rises to the concepts of a spiritual soul and of God: hence it does not start from the existence of the soul and of God, and thence descend to facts, but it begins with facts and thence mounts to the soul and to God. In the field of cognition we proceed from the lowest beings to the supreme Being, God.

3. St. Thomas and the Validity of Our Knowledge

This method has led many to reproach St. Thomas with absolute ignorance of the problem of knowledge, which is so much in evidence in contemporary discussion. Thomism, it is urged, is a childish dogmatism, which does not even touch the preliminary question of all philosophy, namely, can we know being? *That is the question,* especially to-day, since Kant has spoken. A system that fails to answer it except in an *a priori* fashion, is unworthy of consideration.

I grant that St. Thomas does not attack the problem of knowledge as it is understood to-day. But it seems to me that those who enter this complaint are wrong in not asking themselves, whether

the question could have had a meaning for the medieval thinker. To understand St. Thomas one must regard his teaching *in the light of that idea of being which is its essential note.* This is an indispensable requisite for the great Doctor's opponents as well as for those of his followers who would correct or round out his teaching.

1. According to the ideology of St. Thomas, as Professor Giuseppe Zamboni observes in his work on *Problemi Antichi e Idee Nuove,* "the senses give us the phenomena. The sense of sight presents a certain definite color, a certain extension; the sense of taste, a definite savour, which we feel or have felt. These sensations and images group and associate themselves in a fixed manner. Of an orange, for example, the sense of sight gives me such and such a color, the muscular sense such and such a weight, the sense of smell this particular odor, and so on. In other words they confront me with a group of phenomena. When I perceive the *datum, i. e.,* some particular phenomenon, with my senses, my intellect proceeds to consider this *datum from its own point of view* and says: here is something that exists, here is a being. The function of the senses is to put me in the presence of something green, heavy, fragrant; the function of the intellect is to place me in the presence of a *being. . . . 'Intellectus naturaliter cognoscit ens'*—it is the nature of the in-

tellect to know being. If, for example, I see a black point moving in the air, if I feel resistance while walking in the dark, my first thought is: Here *is* something; subsequently I say: This something has this or that color, such and such a shape, these dimensions, presents such and such physical, chemical, biological, psychical aspects, so that I am led to say that this hitherto vague something is an airplane, or an eagle, or a fly or whatever else it may be. Let us assume that it is an eagle. I study its characteristics carefully, but at the bottom of all the experimental, scientific, mathematical researches I can make about this eagle, will always remain the notion: This eagle is a *being,* it *exists,* independently of the thought by which I conceive it. The table, the pen, the animal, the ego, exist even when no one thinks them." The existence of the thing, that is, its reality independent of thought, or that energy by which it maintains itself in the order of the actual, cannot be properly defined. The concept of *being* is at the bottom of every concept; it is the first idea conceived by the mind when it comes in contact with experience (external and internal); it is perfectly clear in itself, and distinct from the concept of mere presence, time, or space. Everyone says: I exist, and understands and feels without further explanation what this word means. *Illud quod primo*

intellectus concipit quasi notissimum est ens,—what the intellect conceives first of all as the best known of all, is *being.*

2. This idea of being, conceived by an *original* act proper to a faculty called intellect, is abstracted from reality, and from every grade of reality, because in effect every form of reality is *being.* Color is a form of being (*c'est de l'être,* the French would say); life, motion, action, sound, taste, all are forms of being. There is not a thing in the world to which the note of being does not apply.

The *origin* of this idea, then, is to be sought in the data furnished by sensation. But from the fact that the process by which we form ideas *starts* with sensation, it by no means follows that the *final product* is of the same nature as sensation, or that it is reducible to, and has the individuating qualities distinctive of, sensations. The sensory datum is elaborated by the intellect, which discerns, intues *being,* the *ratio entis,* that is, an *original* datum, refractory to a sensist interpretation, and to be classified apart from the data of sense, because of its special and essentially different nature.

It is not the senses that perceive being. They merely perceive shape, weight, taste, smell, which are then conceived by the intellect as *being,* as an *entity.* This entity, however, is not a residue of a sensible

nature; it is not the proper object of any of the senses; it is not formed by any image or perception, but is implicit in all. The act of conceiving the sense data as *being,* as something *existing,* is an act of the intellect. This idea of being is of a nature different from, and superior to, the sense-images and the results of their associations; the organs of the senses, the nerves, the cerebral and spinal centers, merely fulfil a preparatory function in the formation of thought. If the *origin of the idea* is in sensation (*nihil est in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu*), *the nature of the idea* is quite different from sensation itself. There is an essential distinction between sense and intellect.

3. After the intellect has grasped, in the phenomena of sense, this first notion of being, which is its proper object, after it has formed this first concept, contained in all the things which the senses can offer, because all are apprehended as something that exists, we proceed to elaborate this fundamental idea, which at first was confused and indeterminate. And with the idea of being we form all the other metaphysical ideas, whose validity, therefore, is bound up with that of the idea of being. *He who admits that we can truly say: "something exists," he who recognizes the objective validity of the initial notion of being, cannot raise the question as to the validity of the other ideas, for all are resolved*

into that one. Illud . . . in quo [*intellectus*] *omnes conceptiones resolvit, est ens.*"

And so:

Essence is what a being is.

Existence is the act by which a being is.

Potency is that which can be, or the capacity for being.

Act is that which exists.

Substance is that which has existence in itself.

Accident is that which has no autonomous existence.

God is the Being that exists, and cannot not exist.

Cause is that by which being begins to be.

Effect is that which exists by virtue of another being.

End is the reason for the existence of a being.

The true is being in so far as it is known.

The good is being in so far as it is desired.

Becoming is the passage from non-being to being.

Matter and *Form* are the elements of substantial being, which is created and corporeal.

In short, all the ideas of Thomistic metaphysics are a development of the idea of being, and, like this idea, bear the marks of universality and of independence from time and space, which essentially differentiate them from sense-images and sensations. They are not inborn but acquired, as grounded in the idea of being. They are not seen

in God, in the eternal ideas or reasons, but in created reality, where, little by little, with the patient effort of induction and analysis, we seek to find out what things are, what their essence and nature. In this manner, starting from the material offered by the senses, we ascend the mount of metaphysics and find that this entire domain of ideas is dominated by the one sovereign idea of being.

4. For St. Thomas, the supreme *principles* of thought and reality stand in intimate relation to the metaphysical *concepts* of being.

Well-known is the following passage of the *Summa Theologica* (Ia, IIæ, qu. 94, art. 2): "What our intellect comes to know first of all is being, the idea of which is included in everything that man knows. Hence the first undemonstrable principle is that a thing cannot be affirmed and denied at one and the same time. This principle is founded on the concept of being and non-being, and is presupposed by all other principles."

The order in the cognitive process is, therefore, the following: the intelligence, first of all, has the intuition of being; on this intuition it directly founds the principle of contradiction, the best known and most obvious of all, and to which all the other elementary and primary principles are reduced.

Over and over again in his works St. Thomas reminds us that "the knowledge of first principles is

grounded in the cognition of being (*fundatur primorum principiorum notitia*)." If the notion of being is valid, so are first principles. If the former reflects reality, then the latter are laws, not only of thought, but also of reality, of being, because in the last analysis they can be reduced to being and to nothing else.

As a matter of fact, a careful consideration will show that all principles imply the parent idea of being:

The principle of contradiction is stated thus: The same being cannot be and not be at the same time.

The principle of identity says: A being is what it is.

The principle of the excluded third teaches that between being and non-being there is no middle way, that is to say, a thing either is, or it is not.

The principle of causality reminds us that every being that begins to exist, every being that does not contain within itself the reason for its existence, derives it from another being.

All the other principles spring in like manner from the concept of being.

Here, again, he who admits that our intellect can safely assert that it reaches the absolute when it says, "Something exists;" he who grants the objective validity of the notion of being cannot consis-

tently stop halfway, but is inevitably drawn within the domain of Thomistic metaphysics. If being is not a creation of our mind nor an act of our thought, if our spirit,—or better, the act of our thinking,—does not create being, but merely recognizes and ascertains it; if, in other words, one does not deny the objective validity of this concept, then the problem of knowledge cannot even be raised. After a searching inquiry into the validity of the judgments by which I state first principles, I find that it is not a blind and ineluctable force which constrains me to attribute the predicate to the subject, but that it is the light of objective evidence which makes me look attentively at the relations of the two terms to each other. The connection between subject and predicate is made under the influence of evidence, in the light of the intellectual manifestation of their truth; and the connection is made anew every time and is grasped in its very making. From this *seen* connection, concludes Professor Zamboni, first principles draw that character of intrinsic necessity which distinguishes them. They are principles whose truth does not depend on the external world of reality. They abstract from time. They do not appear to us as categories innate in ourselves. On the contrary, we recognize them as the laws of reality; and they are likewise the laws of our thought in so far as they are the laws of reality. They are judgments

that "declare not only an *unthinkableness,* but an *impossibility;* it is being itself that manifests itself as subject to the law of non-contradiction," and to the other laws that flow from this one,—laws which are, therefore, "the laws of being considered as such, and which have a universal application antecedently to experience. Thus is rendered possible the legitimate passage from my sense modification to the existence of the cause that produced it." In short, once the validity of the category of being is recognized, we have a secure foundation on which to raise the entire edifice of metaphysics.

There is but one way to shake and demolish it: by striking at the life-giving idea of being.[1] If this latter were subjective, as the Kantians claim, or if being were an act of creative thought, as the Hegelians would have it, then Thomistic metaphysics would be dealt its death blow. But for St. Thomas the thing most certain was this initial affirmation of being. For him the assertion, "I conceive some

[1] Small wonder, then, that the polemics between Thomists and Rosminians were so heated some years ago. Antonio Rosmini was too profound a thinker not to bring out clearly the essential importance of the idea of being. With this idea he built up his system, and on it he based his position against Kant. But by asserting that the idea of being was inborn in us, he gave rise to some errors, to much confusion, and to a thousand discussions concerning the subjective or objective validity of the idea itself. It is worthy of notice how a slight mistake on this point means the ruin of the whole.

thing, some *thing* exists," was not made lightly or dogmatically. To be sure, he could bring forward no proof for it; not, however, because arguments were deficient or the thesis obscure, but because of its intrinsic and dazzling clearness. To him it seemed absurd that one could doubt being, so forcefully attested, among others, by our consciousness.

"No one," he writes in *De Veritate* (qu. x, art. 12, ad 7), "can assent to the thought that he does not exist; for in the very act of thinking he perceives that he exists." And inasmuch as the entire validity of our knowledge depends on this one single root, being, he could neither raise nor conceive a problem of knowledge such as the old and the new Sceptics propound. These pretend to demonstrate the veracity of our cognitive faculty by means of a process which must needs presuppose it, because they make use of the very faculty about which they doubt.

The Augustinian tendency, as we saw, underscored the second member of the relation: *being* and *the knowledge of being* (or *truth*), took it as the starting-point, and tried to reach being in the name of *truth.* Empiricism tended to limit itself to the first member, being, in the name of experience and fact, without rising to the reasons of being, that is, to its intelligibility or rationality. Placed between these two important currents, St. Thomas

took account of both. And he differed from every one of his precursors, even from Albert the Great, in that he knew how to compass his philosophic synthesis with the notion of being,—a notion found explicitly in the Stagirite, but reaching its complete elaboration only in his medieval commentator.

4. The Problem of Universals

The attitude of St. Thomas on the question of knowledge is closely bound up with his position on another problem which deeply stirred medieval thinkers, especially from the eleventh to the fifteenth century. I mean the question of universals.

Though Scholasticism can not be artificially confined within the bounds of the conflict waged about the problem of universals, none the less, as De Wulf remarks in his *Histoire de la Philosophie Médiévale,* and *Le Problème des Universaux dans son Evolution Historique de IX e au XIII e Siècle,* this problem was one of the first to be put forth in the field of pure speculation and absorbed the greatest effort of thought during this period. When we read the descriptions of these conflicts, and by means of the accurate studies and researches of to-day assist at the disputations of that time and witness the clash between a Roscellin and a St. Anselm, between an Abélard and a St. Bernard, we seem to be viewing

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a battle in which all the resources of the keenest genius and all the weapons of the finest dialectic were engaged.

And that battle, far from having a purely historic interest, is of vital importance even in our own day. From time to time, even though under different forms, the same problem crops up again and calls for a solution. In the epoch of Positivism it is the theory of John Stuart Mill and Taine, entwining itself with ancient Nominalism. Again, it is the discussion concerning the value of the laws of science. Once more, it is the distinction of Benedetto Croce between pure concept and empirical and abstract pseudo-concepts. They are new phases, as Windelband says, "behind which rises the more general and more difficult question whether any metaphysical value belongs to these universal determinations which are the aim of every scientific analysis. There are scientists to-day," continues the German historian of philosophy, "who dismiss the question of universals as having been consigned to the scrap-heap long ago, or look upon it as a malady of outgrown infancy. Until these scientists can tell us with full security and clearness wherein metaphysical reality and the efficacy of what they call *natural laws* consist, we must always tell them: *mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur.*"

The problem,—to indicate it briefly,—was born

of the seeming contradiction between the *universal character of our concepts* and *the individual character of things in themselves.*

We perceive in ourselves the existence of universal ideas. We possess a numerous category of intellectual representations that have for their object being in general and the universal determinations of being, independently of matter and of every individualizing note;—in short, we have a knowledge of things that is abstract and universal. The things accessible to our senses, on the contrary, are particular, individual, concrete. Being as an object *existing* outside of us, seems to have properties totally opposed to being as an object *conceived* by our mind.

Porphyry in his *Isagoge* raised the question about genera and species, but offered no solution. Boëthius upheld two contradictory theses. The first Doctors of the Middle Ages took the dispute up again, and gradually there arose various schools which are usually classified as follows:

1. *Nominalism* solves the seeming discord between the real world and the world of thought by denying the existence and possibility of universal concepts. There are no universal realities in nature, nor are there universal representations in our intellect. What we believe to be abstract and universal concepts are nothing else than a word, a

name, a device, a label for the collective designation of diverse individuals. Our representations are as individual as the reality that we observe.

2. *Conceptualism* recognizes the presence and *ideal* value of universal representations in our mind, but denies them *real* value. In the world of the particular there is no common element realized in each one of them;—there is no universality. The universal forms of our mind have no corresponding real term in external nature, but are mere *concepts,* produced by the mind for reasons of subjective exigency.

3. *Exaggerated Realism* admits the existence of the universal not only in our thought, but in the reality of things. The harmony, therefore, between the universal concept and objective reality is evident, because the concept mirrors the real in the exact degree of universality with which it is invested.

4. *Moderate Realism* faces the difficulty: "How can a *universal* representation be in agreement with a world that contains nothing but individuals," and solves it thus: It is quite true that things are individual. But in the individuals we discover common notes, marks of equality, types, identical essences, which, while they have no universality in the single beings, when the intellect considers and views them in relation to the particular subjects in which they are or can be realized, are found to be attribut-

able to each and all. In other words, in the individuals there is that in which they agree and that by which they differ; without error the mind can perceive the agreement and prescind from the difference. The universal concept as such (*formaliter*) is in the intellect only; but it has its potential foundation (*est fundamentaliter et potentialiter*) in things, in the external world.

This problem of the universals may be considered from a threefold viewpoint:

1. Psychologically I can consider the general concepts present in my mind, not in their finished state, but in the process of formation. That is, I can seek out and follow up their genesis in the human soul in the light of the special formative laws of the mind.

2. Logically the universal is a notion, a concept existing in the human intellect, and by its nature destined to be predicated of a number of things.

3. Metaphysically the universal is the common essence, the identical substratum of a determinate species, realized or capable of being realized in various individuals.

As a result, the question of universals is essentially connected with metaphysics, and its interest is not restricted to logic and psychology. It was not without reason that St. Thomas fully discussed this

question in his purely metaphysical treatise *De Ente et Essentia.* Besides, a glance at the history of philosophy is enough to make one realize that every solution of the problem of universals has behind it a corresponding metaphysic of its own. To Nominalism, for instance, corresponds *the metaphysic of individualism,* to quote the happy definition of Windelband. To exaggerated Realism corresponds *the metaphysic of ideas or of truth.* To moderate Realism, or realistic Conceptualism, as Canella would prefer to call it, corresponds *the metaphysic of being.* And it is *in relation to the metaphysical conception of being* that we must *now examine the position taken by St. Thomas on the problem of universals.*

We have stated that in the Thomistic theory the intellect is the faculty that grasps *being.* Our intellect seeks to fathom the reason of being. Intellect, knowledge of being, knowledge of the reason of being—all these imply one another.

Now, in studying beings I ascertain that there are some reasons or natures common to different groups. In the manifold squares that really exist, or could exist, I note an identical nature (that of a square and not a circle), or an identical reason of being. All free acts that are or could be accomplished have this in common that, no matter how completely they may differ from one another otherwise, they agree

in the nature of a free act, that is, in one reason of being which is verified in each one and makes them to be free and not compulsory acts. In all the men of yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow, I do not find two individuals, not even two hands exactly alike; and yet all agree in one sole reason of being, in one single human nature,—otherwise they would no longer be men, but, for example, dogs, cats, apes, etc.

At this point another question presented itself. It is much more subtle and has to be well distinguished from the first, though some writers, —among them De Maria,—have confused them. The question concerns the *principium individuationis,* the principle of individuation. If the reason of being is the same in several individuals, how can they possibly differ from one another? How can one conceive a numerical difference where there is specific identity?

St. Thomas answered that the *principle of individuation* is not the common nature, not the essential form, because this form explains the specific identity. Much less can this principle be found in the accidents, which accrue only after the individual has been constituted. Therefore it must be the *materia signata quantitate*—matter as marked or determined by quantity. If I take a piece of gold and divide it into two parts, the reason of being of

each is the same, because both the one and the other is gold, and this cannot explain the numerical distinction. Instead, this distinction finds its explanation in matter, in the determinate quantity of matter contained in the two pieces.

If the human intellect were not only a *faculty of being,* but in its first intuition would lay hold of the *whole reality* of the single things; if in this fashion it could know being *in its entirety,* down to its innermost depths and recesses, then, even while bringing out the reason of being common to several individuals, it would see it individualized in *this* matter, with *these* individuating notes, and the individual would be grasped in its complete singularity.

But here is the drawback: our intellect, while truly a faculty for knowing being, is imperfect in that it is an *abstractive* faculty. It does not mirror the *whole* being; it does not know matter, the source of individuation. But it abstracts from being the reason of being common to a definite group of things. And there is question not only of an *isolating abstraction,*—which, in considering a determinate object, prescinds from one part of its reality to fix on the examination of another part,—but of a *universalizing abstraction.* As we shall see later, when studying the limits of Thomistic intellectualism, the human intellect can not reach the individual directly; it does not know beings except by abstracting

from matter and from individualizing and differentiating characteristics (*Summa Theologica,* Ia, qu. 79, art. 3; qu. 57, art. 2, ad 1 etc.). Confronted by the sensory datum of a group of men, circles, and so on, the intellect abstracts from the matter of which they consist, from their color, their dimensions, and directly seizes only their reason of being, their nature, their *quidditas* or essence.

This *reason of being,* this *quidditas,*—by which beings are what they are and not different, and which does not give us the *whole* of an individual, but only an essential aspect of it,—in so far as it is considered as existing in the single beings, was called by St. Thomas the *metaphysical universal, the direct universal, intentio prima.* He called it universal because, by abstracting from the individualizing conditions, it could be applied to many. He said that it existed *in re,* in reality, *non quoad modum concipiendi, sed quoad rem conceptam;* that is, not after the manner of our representation (because the nature of man, for example, does not exist as a universal, without matter and individualizing notes), but as to the thing represented (because in every individual man there is the nature of man).

If, instead, this nature is viewed, not as it is individualized in the single beings, but in itself; if the mind returns to the object taken in the state of

abstraction and considers it, as St. Thomas said, *reduplicative ut universale,*—precisely *in so far as* it is universal, that is, in so far as it can be or is communicated to many,—then we have the *logical* universal, the *reflex* universal, the universal *secundae intentionis,* which, of course, exists only in the mind. It is an elaboration of the concept of the reason of being;—it is the concept of a concept.

St. Thomas had to reach his tempered realism by virtue of his theory concerning being and the knowledge of being. If in the groups of individual beings,—the only ones that exist,—the intellect discovers and abstracts a common and universal nature or reason of being, then we understand how a universal representation can be in agreement with a world that contains nothing but individuals. In these there exists a common reason of being, which I can represent to myself by abstracting, prescinding from matter and individual characteristics. Its applicability to many individuals is its universality. But in the particular beings it is realized not in the abstract, but together with the individual notes. In this manner the vexing problem of the universals was solved.

If, on the one hand, this solution followed naturally from the Thomistic conception of the reality of the intellect as a faculty abstractive of being, on

the other, it was a synthesis of all the other theories.

Moderate Realism, upheld by St. Thomas together with Aristotle, Abélard, Alexander of Hales, and Albert the Great, grants to Nominalism and Conceptualism that the universal, logically considered, exists only in the mind; and it agrees with the metaphysics of individualism in maintaining that in the reality of things individuals alone exist.

As to exaggerated Realism, the Thomistic theory admits that the universal is not a name or a mere concept of the mind, but has a reality in things themselves, not, indeed, as to the manner of representation, but as to the thing represented. Moreover, satisfying the demands of the metaphysics of ideas and truth, it distinguishes

(a) the *universale ante rem,* that is to say, the essential ideas of things as they exist *from all eternity* in the divine Mind,—ideas affirmed by St. Augustine in his improvement on the Platonic ideas, the eternal and immutable prototypes of phenomenal realities;

(b) the *universale in re,* or the metaphysical universal, immanent in things, which is the general and eternal type (*ante rem*) as realized in existing or possible individuals;

(c) the *universale post rem,* or the logical universal, existing only in the human mind, as the abstract concept universalized.

As in other problems, so here, too, St. Thomas—preceded in this especially by his teacher, Albert the Great—united the various currents of his time into a single stream, vivified by the idea of being.

5. The Metaphysics of St. Thomas

If in the field of knowledge being is the ladder by which we mount from the lowest rungs to the summit, in the ontological domain perfect Being is the sole source of all other beings, so that reality does not appear as sundered by unexplainable scissions, but manifests itself as connected and animated by being.

The supreme reality is God, Being *tout court,* simply; it is that which exists and cannot not exist, that whose essence is its existence, and therefore full, perfect, total existence, that is to say, absolute actuality and perfection. In this Being, in whom there is no real distinction between essence and existence, any imperfection, change, potentiality is simply inconceivable.

Only this Being by essence can explain, that is, furnish us with the true reason of the universe and of all things which come within our experience, which change, which become, and by that token are not absolute, necessary, perfect Being, but contingent and imperfect beings. Precisely because they are such, they are not pure actuality,

but composed of *potency* and *act,* that is, they are limited in their perfection and do not possess the fulness of being. For this reason we must distinguish in them *essence* from *existence.* Their essential notes do not contain the sufficient reason of their existence. Existence is *in* them, but not *from* them, otherwise they would be the absolute and not the contingent, the perfect and not the imperfect.

Two questions can be put in regard to every being: "Does it really exist?" and, "What is it?" These two questions about the *existence* and *essence* of things receive a different solution according as they concern the necessary Being or the other beings. In the case of the former it would be a contradiction not to think of Him as existing. The essence of the latter does not imply their existence; the properties of a triangle, the nature of man or of a tree, for instance, do not imply that men or triangles must of necessity exist. The idea representing a triangle remains absolutely the same, whether this triangle exists in reality or not. But the idea of the necessary Being implies the note of existence in its very essence. That the necessary Being exists or does not exist will, of course, have to be demonstrated,—but not *a priori.* However, if He does exist, there is in Him no distinction between essence and existence, no composition of potency and act:

by definition He is complete and self-subsisting Being.

Between the beings whose existence is not of their essence, but to whom existence "happens," is contingent (*accidit esse*), we can make another division.

There are beings whose property it is to exist in themselves and not in another. Here we have *substance,* the subject that does not depend on another (created) subject, the subject on which the actions, movements, activities, changes lean and depend. Our soul, for example, is a substance: without this stable and lasting principle all the manifold phenomena of our life would be without foundation, root, and unity.

There are beings, on the contrary, to whose nature it belongs to exist in another. These are the *accidents,* distributed in nine categories. They are rather *beings of being* than beings in the full sense, because they presuppose substance, which alone is competent of *being* in the proper and more true meaning. *"Ens,"* we read in *De Ente et Essentia, "absolute et per prius dicitur de substantiis, per posterius autem et quidem secundum quid de accidentibus."*

Of the substances, some are *immaterial,* others *material.*

Prescinding from God, the spiritual substances are immaterial. Because of the dominion they

exercise over their acts, and because of their freedom to act or not to act, they are given a special name,—that of *person.*

The other substances in their turn are composed of matter and form, that is, of a potential and an actual element.

Briefly, *being* appears to the mind of St. Thomas in this manner: perfect and necessary Being, contingent and limited beings whose essence is distinct from their existence; beings in themselves,—the substances, beings in another,—the accidents; immaterial beings and beings composed of matter and form. And in this comprehensive conception (which sums up and rounds out the whole of Aristotelianism, with the theories of potency and act, with the study of the causes of being,—material, formal, efficient, final,—and the doctrine of the categories) everything is reduced to *being,* in the unity of a plan, inasmuch as all beings by participation depend on the Being by essence.

To being as such, moreover, belong certain properties, which are always and of necessity present in everything that exists. Without taking away anything of its transcendental and primal character from the general notion of being, these properties nevertheless render it more applicable and richer. These properties of being, known as transcendentals, are three: the *unum,* the *verum,* the *bonum.* That

is to say: if a thing is one, it exists; if a thing is true, it exists; if a thing is good, it exists; and *vice versa*: if there is a being, it is one, it is true, it is good.

In a well-known passage of the treatise *De Veritate* (qu. I, art. 1) there are enumerated five transcendental notions of being, for to the three mentioned St. Thomas adds *res* and *aliquid*. If a thing exists, it has its nature, it is a *res*, it is one thing and not a different thing. In like manner, if a thing exists, it is not only undivided in itself, it is *unum*, but it is also divided from every other being, it is an *aliud quid*, a something else, an *aliquid*, in the expression peculiar to medieval philosophic Latin. But it is quite evident that the *res* (thing), the *aliquid*, and the *unum* constitute and concurrently integrate the first great transcendental notion flowing from the idea of being and applicable to every being, that is to say, the idea of *unity*.

For St. Thomas, then, *"ens, unum, verum et bonum convertuntur," i. e.*, the notion of being coincides with that of oneness, of truth, of perfection. And because at first sight this thesis might seem somewhat abstruse, it will not be superfluous to say a word in illustration of the paramount importance of this Thomistic position.

This position,—let us say it at once,—is the result of a synthetic vision of all preceding thought.

As a matter of fact, Aristotle with his theory of matter and form, had demonstrated the unity of substance in his *Metaphysics*. Substance is an individual whole, containing two essential principles, matter and form, as directly united to each other as the edge to the axe and sight to the eye. If every form were done away with, there would be no matter, and without matter, there would be no form here below. Every substance, then, is one in its duality. Oneness cannot be conceived as external to being. For Aristotle, says Ravaisson, unity and being are as identical as the concavity and convexity of a curve. The act of being is of itself unitary: if being is not one, then there are two or more beings; but in one being, despite the multiplicity of phenomena, there is a oneness that coincides with being.

In his study of reality Plato had stressed another idea,—the idea of the good. The Good in the Platonic system is the soul,—if one may use this expression,—of being. It is the supreme idea, the primordial fountain, from which all beings draw, and of which they partake. The true reality, the ideas, precisely because they have being, are rays of this supreme luminous source, in which, in the opinion of many, consists the God of Plato. Being, therefore, coincides with goodness.

However, the founder of the Academy fell into a

serious error: his characteristic dualism, which led him to recognize the ideas and their world as the only true being, the only true reality. For this reason the Neo-Platonic school, and later in a very special manner St. Augustine, completed the teaching of the Master. Under the influence of Christian thought the sun of goodness beamed on all reality, on every being, and a third point, that of Truth, was brought into clearer light. The supreme Being is supreme Truth and supreme Goodness; everything that depends on this One is a ray of truth and is a good. For St. Augustine no being exists that is not one, and true, and good. Evil under whatever form,—intellectual or moral,—is only relative; it is the privation of a natural good, but it is not an absolute entity. The perfect Principle can create nothing but what is unity, truth, goodness.

By this time the following philosophical conclusions had been gained by the Augustinian speculation:

1. Reality, being, is unity in multiplicity; therefore the concept of individuality is valid.

2. Reality is intelligible, or, as the moderns would say, it is rational, because it is either Reason itself or a creation of Reason. To speak of reality and to speak of truth, intelligibility, and rationality, is one and the same thing.

3. Reality is perfection, either absolute or par-

ticipated; therefore, to speak of reality, of finality, of goodness, is again one and the same thing.

A metaphysic or a philosophical system is possible only in so far as the start is made from this basis.

(a) The philosophical system must be unity in multiplicity; the various theses form but one thesis; the various parts are united with one another like the members of an organism. And this is impossible unless being itself is unity in multiplicity. The system must mirror reality as it is; only on condition that in reality itself being is unity, can we understand that also in the systematic conception to know is to unify.

(b) The philosophical system would become inconceivable if the real were not rational, if *being* and *truth* did not coincide. Let us suppose, as a hypothesis, that reality were irrational. This would mean that the meaningless would exist. Our reason, too, would be meaningless, and its operations, its reasonings, would be a mass of absurdities. How, then could a philosophy be constructed?

(c) A philosophical system necessarily means a teleological vision of the universe, which must overcome dark pessimism and empty optimism. Absolute evil would be an irrationality, and we should fall into the preceding predicament.

The same holds true of the moral domain: the

very possibility of ethics and the realization of a moral life entail those three properties of being.

St. Thomas did not hesitate to gather up this material worked out by his predecessors. In his metaphysics, too, being may be considered in itself, or in its relation to the intellect, or in its reference to the will.

Considered in itself, every being is one, as the *Summa Theologica* teaches (Ia, qu. 11, art. 1), and "*one* does not add anything to *being;* it is only a negation of division: for one means undivided being. This is the very reason why one is the same as being. Every being is either simple or compound. What is simple, is undivided, both actually and potentially. What is compound, has not got being whilst its parts are divided, but only after they make up and compose it. Hence it is manifest that the being of anything consists in undivision; and hence it is that everything keeps unity as it keeps being." And here St. Thomas seeks to explain how the unity of a being harmonizes with its composition, whether metaphysical or physical. If, for example, I observe myself, I see that I am endowed with rationality, sensibility, life, corporeity, substance. I see likewise that I am composed of matter and form, and so on; and yet I am one single being. With analyses of surpassing nicety St. Thomas examines how the various formalities or

the multiplicity of component parts do not destroy the actual unity of the subject.

If we consider reality in reference to the intellect, every being is true. Indeed, of every being, by the very fact that it is, it is true that it is what it is. *Quidquid est, intelligi potest,*—everything that exists has its reason of being. The notion of entity implies that of ontological truth.

Finally, if reality is viewed in relation to the will, every being is good. For St. Thomas the good has the nature of the desirable, of that which stirs appetency: *"bonum est quod omnia appetunt,"*—goodness is what all desire. Hence he proceeds in this manner: "It is clear that a thing is desirable only in so far as it is perfect; for all desire their own perfection. Everything is perfect in so far as it is actual. Therefore, it is clear that a thing is perfect in so far as it exists; for it is existence that makes all things actual. Hence it follows that goodness and being are really the same," (*Summa Theol.*, Ia, qu. 5, art. 6).

Here, too, the Thomistic synthesis is characterized by being. It is being that is necessarily one; it is being that is of necessity intelligible; it is being that must needs be act, perfection, goodness. From the notion of being flow the other notions of individuality, intelligibility or rationality, and finality. And even in the order of the transcendentals St.

Thomas upholds this priority of being. First of all, there is being, as he teaches in *De Veritate* (qu. 21, art. 3, c.); after being, the one; then the true; after the true comes the good. This is so because a thing is one in so far as it exists; it can be understood in so far as it exists and is one; it is good in so far as it is present to the mind not only in its specific essence, but also according to the being it has in itself.

All this is quite clear in the entirety of the Thomistic system. Given that being exists and that the being which is contingent, limited, caused, in the process of becoming, depends throughout on the Being that is necessary, perfect, unchangeable, uncaused, the last end of all reality,—it is evident why St. Thomas reasoned on general lines (as he does in *De Ente et Essentia* concerning goodness) as follows: from the one, the true, the good can come only what is one, true, good. But every being proceeds from the divine unity, truth, and goodness. Therefore, every being is one, true, and good. And in this reasoning the source of all is always *being*.

6. Conclusion

If the historians of philosophy were fully aware of this unity of the Thomistic metaphysics, they would not stop at the usual exposition of the dualisms of medieval thought. The philosophy of St.

Thomas,—we are told over and over again,—is a perfect dualism: God and the world, soul and body, reason and faith, sense and intellect, potency and act, matter and form, and so on. It is, of course, quite true that for St. Thomas God is not the world, the soul is not the body, and so forth. But such methods will not lead to an understanding of the unity of the Thomistic conception; for in this conception the notion of being, in the terminology of the School, is transcendental,—it goes beyond and transcends every special kind of being and is found again in each one: God is a being, I am a being, my pen is a being, my thought is a being. *Quidquid est, si quid est, ens est.* And all these beings proceed from one single Being, which is the reason of all being. In the explanation and evaluation of an organism it is a shallow procedure to stop short at the number of members, without grasping the unity of the spirit that vivifies the whole.

And it is to be well noted that, though *being* inspires the entire Thomistic system, this system has not even a distant kinship with Pantheism. The theory of the analogy of being cuts off every thread by which one would seek to establish a communication with Pantheistic views. The Being of God is not the being of creatures, and this notwithstanding the fact that the second proceeds from the first.

Dualism, in short, is a consequence of Thomism; it gives us the branches of the tree; but its vital principle stands fast in *being* conceived as ontological reality. Positivistic Phenomenalism and the modern theories of Voluntaristic Monism or of the Spirit as pure act are the utter negation of St. Thomas. Not indeed that St. Thomas overlooked the rights of thought and of the will. But for him one and the other alike are inconceivable without a being that thinks and wills. The ontological viewpoint is strenuously and constantly asserted in every part of his philosophical and theological system. Being exists in itself, and not in so far as it is thought or willed. The supreme Being, too, in whom thought is identical with essence, the "Thought of Thought," too,—as Aristotle would have said,—is an ontological reality. *Being* is the word that sums up the whole Thomistic metaphysics. We shall see presently what riches of development and application it contains.

CHAPTER III

BEING IN THE THEODICY OF ST. THOMAS

His biographers relate that St. Thomas, when not yet five years old, was brought from Roccasecca, the family castle of the Counts of Aquino, to the neighboring monastery of Monte Cassino, where he remained for some years to receive his primary education. It was during this serene boyhood, passed in the busy silence of the historic cloister, that he was wont to run to the cells of the Fathers and ask with ingenuous anxiety: "What is God?"

As the thought of God thus early quickened the future constructor of the two *Summae,* so later, as Grabmann has rightly established, "the center of the Thomistic world of thought is the idea of God. The knowledge of a supra-mundane, personal God is the superb crown of his metaphysics. The glance into the mysterious inner life of God . . . constitutes the highest degree of theological speculation." It is St. Thomas himself who recognizes this in *Contra Gentiles* (I, c. 4), when he writes that "almost every philosophical question tends to the

knowledge of God;" and in the *Summa Theologica* (Ia, qu. 1, art. 7), that "in sacred science (theology) all things are treated of under the formality of God, either because they are God Himself, or because they refer to God as their beginning and end."

But this theocentric character of the Thomistic doctrine must likewise be studied in function of the idea of being. In the ontological order God is the perfect Being, and, as we saw when we explained the conclusions of the entire metaphysics of St. Thomas, God is absolute Being, the source of all other things, of every degree of entity, and the ultimate explanation of the transcendental properties of being. In the order of knowledge it is from being by participation that St. Thomas rises to Being by essence. And being is the idea that explains to him the metaphysical nature of God, creation, and the conservation of things. In theodicy too, we have a synthesis reached by means of the idea of being. This we now proceed to show.

1. The Existence of God

After refuting the conceptualistic proof of God proposed by St. Anselm, because, as we saw, he could not approve the method of affirming being in the name of the idea, St. Thomas explains his famous proofs of the existence of God, or, as he describes them, his "five ways for reaching God." We

recall the magnificent article in the *Summa Theologica* (Ia, qu. 2, art. 3), which has called forth a vast literature and is being discussed to-day with unquenchable animosity on the one side and unsubdued admiration on the other.

The validity of the well-known five arguments will be fully grasped if we view them in their historical origin and in the light of the one concept that informs them.

1. As to their historical genesis, the power of the *synthetic* genius of St. Thomas is evident also in this matter. Inattention to this fact has led many contemporary thinkers to attribute to the five Thomistic proofs a meaning they were never intended to have.

The first proof, that of the immobile mover, is the perfect and definitive form of an argument first formulated by Anaxagoras, taken up again by Plato in the tenth book of the *Laws,* and developed by Aristotle in the twelfth book of his *Metaphysics.* Aristotle started from the fact, established against Parmenides, that *becoming* is a reality, and from a principle, upheld against Heraclitus, that *becoming* does not explain itself. But for the Stagirite the immobile mover was not the creator of matter, but only its ordainer; and in the interpretation of some he was an ordainer unconscious of his function. The "thought of thought," happy in himself, moved

beings as the immovable flag on the mountain-top sets in motion the army that wishes to reach it.

St. Thomas rounds off and corrects this line of reasoning: with the same Aristotelian theory of movement,—which does not refer to local motion alone, but to every passage whatsoever from potency to act,—he reaches the pure act that explains becoming, but does not itself become, does not pass from the potential to the actual because it is perfect actuality.

The second and third proof from causality and contingence are a development of the fundamental conceptions of Aristotelian metaphysics. Aristotle, carrying the Platonic idea over into things, had shown the rationality of the real. The data of experience can be resolved into their rational elements. Against Democritus and the Atomists he held that we must go beyond the empirical ascertainment of the phenomenon in order to interpret and understand it. And against Plato he maintained that this interpretation should be an explanation of the real, and not a separated idea. From the examination of phenomena,—and it matters little whether there is question of only one or of all the phenomena of the universe,—from the study of their essential characters we come to know that they are caused and contingent, and with an affirmation that is essentially

positive we conclude to the existence of an uncaused Cause and a necessary Being.

The fourth argument from limited perfections is a step beyond the position of St. Augustine. By the rays we are led to the sun, no longer, however, in the name of an *a priori* principle, but by way of an *a posteriori* ascertainment of reality. The existence of an imperfect reality, as the Stagirite had previously noted, calls for the perfection that can be its sufficient reason.

The last proof,—that from finality,—is one into which Anaxagoras had already had an insight. It was developed by Socrates, appropriated by Plato, wonderfully improved by Aristotle, and finally matured by St. Augustine through the solution of the problem of evil.

Once more it is evident that, at every point of his construction, St. Thomas gives us a synthesis. And I do not hesitate to add that in theodicy, too, —indeed, here more than elsewhere,—he inspires his synthesis with the idea of *being*.

2. In point of fact, what is the idea that scintillates in these proofs for the existence of God?

The five "ways" can be readily expressed in function of the idea of being.

The being that changes requires the existence of the Being that is, and does not become. The im-

mobile mover is Being in its pure actuality. In the conception of the Supreme Prime Mover there is no other idea but that of being.

Contingent being,—the being that can exist or not exist, in whose essential notes existence is not included,—exists, has being, in so far as there is a necessary Being, that is, a Being whose essence is existence.

The being that begins to exist, the effect, cannot find within itself the explanation of its existence. If it begins to be, it was not before; and if it did not exist, it could not give itself being. Therefore, it owes its being to the Supreme Cause, to the Being that has never begun to exist, that has not received its own being from another, that is Being *a se*.

Limited and imperfect being, because of its very limitation and imperfection, cannot be Being itself. What is limited does not hold within itself the reason of its being.

The finality of beings means the existence of a Being that is pure intelligence.

In short, all these reasonings are founded on the idea of being. What is more, if we observe well, the very procedure of St. Thomas is always based on that idea.

It was said with reason that in his five "ways" the Angelic Doctor starts from a *fact*, applies a *principle*, and reaches a *conclusion*. The *fact* is that of things

in the process of becoming, of caused beings, of contingence, of limited perfection, of order. The *principle* is: whatever moves is moved by another; the effect presupposes a cause; contingent being presupposes necessary being; the lower and the higher call for the existence of the highest; order points to an ordainer. The *conclusion:* therefore, God exists.

So far so good. But there is also this to be noted: the initial fact always concerns being as given by experience, namely, the being that becomes, that begins, that could not be, that is circumscribed, that indicates finality. The *principle* is always one of the supreme laws of being examined in the preceding chapter. The *conclusion* is an affirmation of the Being by essence, of the Being as pure act, *a se,* necessary, perfect, intelligent. *The point of departure is being, and the point of arrival is Being, by way of the laws of being.* To overlook this fact is to debar oneself from understanding the mind of St. Thomas.

In their critical discussions of the Thomistic arguments the moderns give evidence of missing this true meaning intended by the medieval thinker. If, for example, they are materialists, they will say that the motion of to-day depends on that of yesterday, and so on down the line, even unto infinity. With Kant they will aver that if every phenomenon has its cause in another phenomenon, then we can never

come out of the phenomenal series. They will urge that the external manifestations of profound reality,—matter or spirit,—are indeed contingent, but that the atoms or the spiritual reality are eternal and necessary. They will point out that the argument from the final causes proves an ordainer, but not a creator, of the world.

One and all, these are criticisms that mistake the viewpoint of St. Thomas. For, when speaking of *being,* he refers not so much to the phenomenon empirically taken, to the accident, as, and above all, to the substance. For him *being* is not only the phenomenon that changes, that begins to be, that is caused, that is limited, that has the end intrinsic to itself. He is not even concerned about the length of the series of phenomena, and says that reason alone cannot prove that the world had a beginning. Even if the phenomenal series were infinite, this would not do away with the fact that *being* is in a state of change and betrays all the characteristics which go to prove that it is not the absolute.

In short, to be properly evaluated, the five proofs presuppose an entire metaphysic. This latter in its turn, is the synthesis of a very long speculation, to be pondered in the light of the idea of being. As this idea, in the mind of St. Thomas, refers to a datum of assured fact, it precludes the confusing of the Thomistic arguments with the ontological proof

of St. Anselm. Kant's attempt to reduce the proofs of St. Thomas to the Anselmian proof is a futile one. It is not from the idea, but from reality, from being as existing, that St. Thomas takes his start; and the pinions he uses in his flight are none other than the laws of being.

2. The Nature of God

The same holds true when St. Thomas passes from the problem of the existence of God to the question of His nature: he never loses sight of his great principle of being.

Not all students and commentators of St. Thomas are of one mind concerning his teaching on the metaphysical essence of God. However, without plunging into subtle discussions, I believe that the logical thread of the whole Thomistic system should lead us to subscribe to the interpretation upheld among others by Cardinal Louis Billot, and before him admirably illuminated by Schiffini in the second volume of his *Special Metaphysics.*

In what does the metaphysical essence of God consist?

By *metaphysical essence* the medieval Scholastics meant

(a) that which primarily constitutes a being in its entity, *i. e.,* makes it what it is.

(b) that which is the original root, the primal

source from which all the properties and attributes applicable to the thing proceed;

(c) that which distinguishes a being from all others.

In applying this definition to God and seeking the metaphysical constitutive of the Deity, the Scholastics were divided into various groups. Some placed it in actual intellection, others in radical infinity, or in the exigency of all perfections, or in the cumulus of every perfection; others assigned aseity (*ens a se*) as the metaphysical nature of God; others the supreme degree of intellectuality, or absolute divine immateriality.

But, writes Grabmann, if we hold to what St. Thomas himself says about it, we must recognize the metaphysical concept of God in *absolute being.* God is the subsisting being itself, *ipsum esse subsistens.* This is the definition, observes the *Summa Theologica* (Ia, qu. 13, art. 11), which God gave of Himself: "I am who am, I am Being, Jahvé." This is the conclusion,—as Aquinas inculcates in many other writings,—of our speculation about God, because it brings us to recognize that "the nature of God is nothing else than His being" (*De Ente et Essentia,* c. 6), that "in God His being is the same thing as His essence" (*Comment. in Sent.,* I, dist. 8, l. 1), and that His essence is His being: *"sua igitur essentia est suum esse"* (*Summa Theologica,*

Ia, qu. 3, art. 4). In the works of St. Thomas we can readily find proof for the assertion that all those notes which constitute the metaphysical nature of God appertain to subsisting Being.

In the first place, absolute being is that which, according to our manner of conception and expression, primarily and positively makes God to be God.

For St. Thomas, as we have often repeated, to speak of being is to speak of reality, perfection, actuality. Hence we argue: being and actuality coincide; but by its infinite perfection the divine essence is purest actuality; therefore, the divine essence is purest being—absolute, subsisting Being.

All perfections, attributes, properties of God flow from this single source. *"Secundum hoc enim dicitur aliquid esse perfectum, secundum quod est in actu"* (*Summa Theologica*, Ia, qu. 4, art. 1); that is, the degree of a being's perfection depends on the degree of its actuality. Hence none of the perfections of being can be wanting to Him who is actuality itself, the subsisting Being.

God, therefore, is perfect because the *esse subsistens* has the fulness of being, that is, of actuality, of perfection.

God is the highest good because goodness and being coincide: *"ens et bonum convertuntur."* As He is the highest being, He is also the highest good, —just as He is Truth by essence and One by essence.

God is most simple because in what is composed there is potency and act. But in Him who is the absolute perfection of being, everything *is*, everything is act; there is no potency, and therefore no composition.

God is infinite because, as He is Being itself, He can have no limitation in the line of being.

God is eternal because the *ipsum esse subsistens* does not become, and hence has neither a past, nor a present, nor a future, but *is*. And for the same reason He is immutable.

There is, in short, no divine attribute that does not depend on *subsisting being;* and from this it is clear why God is totally distinct from *created, participated, limited being;* the latter *has* being, but *is not* Being.

Absolute being, as Cardinal Billot and Grabmann rightly observe, is not to be confused with abstract universal being. "The absolute being of God means something real, concrete, personal, while universal being is a product of abstraction formally existing in the intellect and only fundamentally in reality; it results from the analysis of concepts taken from reality, and is like the ultimate element common to all things, and therefore predicable of all things. In *De Ente et Essentia* (cap. 6) Thomas himself has traced with precision the line of separation be-

tween divine Being and abstract being. When we say, God is being, he remarks, we by no means fall into the error according to which God is abstract being. This abstract being is of such a nature that it cannot exist in its objective reality without addition and determination, whereas, on the contrary, no reality whatsoever can be added to the absolutely subsisting divine Being. The *ipsum esse,* therefore, distinguishes God from created being, puts Him above all the categories of finite being, and acknowleges His absolute transcendence. This *esse subsistens,* as the most real reality and the fulness itself of being, places God at an infinite distance from the being that is abstract and devoid of objectivity."

"If we resolve this setting of the Thomistic conception of God into its historical elements," continues Grabmann, "Thomas stands out as the theologian who achieved a synthesis on a grand scale. In his formative mind the thought of Aristotle and the speculations of Avicenna become united, balanced, and blended with Biblical ideas, with Patristic doctrines (Pseudo-Areopagite, Augustine, Hilary of Poitiers, John Damascene), and with views of the early Scholastics, like Anselm of Canterbury, Bernard of Clairvaux, and others. Under the skilled hand of the master these manifold historical threads are woven into a design of such uniformity that only

a practiced eye can detect the particular coloring and individual quality of these historical constituents."

It is clear, then, that also in discussing the nature of the perfect Being, the Thomistic synthesis has *being* as the word that sums up and the torch that lights the way.

One more problem remained: the relation between Being and beings. It is the problem of the creation of things, of their conservation, and of the Providence of God in the world and in history. In this field, too, St. Thomas is true to himself. He remains loyal alike to his synthetic method and his supreme principle.

3. Creation

The problem of creation is discussed by St. Thomas at some length in questions 44–46 of the first part of the *Summa Theologica,* which I shall follow in this chapter, with additions from the *Quaestiones Disputatae, De Potentia,* and the small philosophical work, *De Aeternitate Mundi Contra Murmurantes.*

The idea of being runs through the Thomistic teaching also on this point. For the very concept of creation, the proof for the fact, the causes and the time of creation are permeated by this single thought.

1. *The concept of creation* is reducible to the concept of being. For, in the mind of St. Thomas, to create is to make something out of nothing, (*"ex nihilo aliquid facere"*). Creation is the production of being as being, because it is nothing else than the passage from non-being to being, and consists in the origin of all beings from the Being that is absolute and self-subsisting. It differs from human "creations," as they are sometimes improperly called, in which there is only the transformation of an essence, of *pre-existing* matter through the production of a new form. In divine creation nothing whatever pre-exists; the entire being is produced without any of its elements existing previously,—the whole being flows from the first and universal source. Take away from this doctrine the concept of being, and it would crumble and lose its meaning. In the concept of creation shines the concept of being.

2. We recognize the same fact when we inquire into the proofs by which St. Thomas has shown, as a philosopher, that the universe was created.

Aristotle had said in the second book of his *Metaphysics* that that which is being in the highest degree, is the cause of all being. In his commentary on this passage St. Thomas says that contingent beings have not the reason of their being in themselves, and cannot but have been created. Had they not been cre-

ated, they would no longer be contingent, but necessary Being. The latter, however, is one and unique, because necessary Being means the fulness of being, perfect actuality. If there were two necessary Beings, the one would not have the being of the other, and neither of the two would be the fulness and perfection of being.

So the investigation of things through their character of contingency, changes, and limitations reveals that they must needs have been created, and proves the existence of a single Creator. This holds true of primal matter as well, added St. Thomas by way of explanation on a page admirable alike for its depth and for that historic sense which always attended his philosophic speculations.

Philosophy, he observes, came to the conquest of truth step by step, and gradually arrived at the concept of creation.

The thinkers of antiquity, when dealing with nature, assigned purely accidental causes to the process of becoming, to the production of new beings, and so remained on the surface of the problem by explaining only accidental changes. Subsequently, especially with Aristotle, thought went deeper. It was now understood that there are essential changes, that new substantial forms come into being and, by uniting themselves to an identical substratum, *i. e.*, primary matter, originate and produce new beings.

In this manner particular agents were assigned as causes for explaining *this* being, or why this being is *such* and not different. Philosophers had not yet reached the point of considering being as being, or of investigating the causes of beings in so far as they are beings, but only in so far as they are *these* or *such* beings. When the problem was stated, it became clear that it was not enough to find the reason in accidental causes or substantial forms: it was necessary to trace things to the source and cause of the whole being. Pure potency, primary matter, could then no longer be looked upon as existing of necessity; for this perfectible element creation appeared even more indispensable than for the formal element.

Once more we have a synthesis, and that by means of the idea of being.

3. Nor do matters stand otherwise when we seek for the *causes of creation.*

St. Augustine,—whom St. Thomas quotes with approval in the *Summa Theologica* (Ia, qu. 15, art. 1),—had attributed such power to the Platonic doctrine of ideas as to say that one could not become a philosopher and attain to wisdom unless one understood them (*"tanta vis in ideis constituitur, ut, nisi his intellectis, sapiens esse nemo potest"*). It is precisely by going beyond Plato's doctrine of ideas that St. Thomas begins his explanation of the man-

ner of creation. He does this by accepting the interpretation of St. Augustine and even attempting to harmonize the teaching of Aristotle with it (cfr. *In Aristotelis Nonnullos Libros Comment.*, t. 4).

Plato had recognized ideas as ontological realities; which existed in themselves, independently of God and of creatures. St. Augustine, instead, credited Plato with teaching that the ideas did indeed exist separately from things, but were identical with the Divine Essence. And together with St. Augustine, Aquinas upheld the necessity of placing ideas of all things in the Divine Mind.

When one does not operate by chance, he writes, the form produced pre-exists in us either according to its *natural being,* as when one man generates another, or according to its *intelligible existence,* as when the idea of the building exists in the mind of the builder. Now, as the world is not made by chance but by God, who acts with His intellect, the form or the idea to the likeness of which the world is created must exist in the divine mind.

God, therefore, urges St. Thomas (qu. 44, art. 3), is the prime exemplar of all things. In the divine wisdom that conceived the order of the universe exist the reasons of all beings, which, though multiplied in respect of things, are really nothing else than God's essence, in so far as He is the fulness

of being and hence His likeness can be participated in by the most diverse number of beings.

By knowing Himself God knows everything else (*"Deus intelligendo se intelligit omnia alia"*). When this divine contemplation of things is followed by an act of the divine will, which makes things to pass from nothingness to being, then we have creation, and its final cause is none other than God Himself. Whereas we act for the sake of acquiring some perfection, and hence for an end distinct from ourselves, God, as the fulness of being and pure actuality, can acquire nothing. He can only communicate His perfection to others: as every creature receives its perfection from God, so it tends towards Him as its last end.

For this reason creation is a participation and imitation of Being. Absolute Being is the efficient, the exemplary, the final cause of beings. As to their origin, these owe all their being to the first and perfect Being. As to their constitutive nature and their entity, they are an imitation of Being. As to their end, they yearn for Being by a progressive and continuous perfective process.

4. It was on the basis of his concept of being that St. Thomas defended the thesis of the possibility of a world created *from eternity*. While Faith teaches that the creation of the world took place

in time, reason can adduce no decisive proofs in this debate.

My observation of the nature of contingent things yields nothing to convince me that they must have had a beginning in time. Considering the will of God, the cause of beings, I find no reason whatever why God should of necessity have willed that these beings begin in time. The only point that I find certain in examining beings is, not that they must have begun in time, but that they are contingent. Reason, as Moses Maimonides and the Arabian and Mohammedan philosophers maintained, cannot prove apodictically the impossibility of creation from eternity. Provided the existence of Being by essence be admitted and demonstrated, St. Thomas could come upon no apodictical argument, —neither in Being nor in beings,—that would exclude the being by participation from an existence without beginning. Hence his position; it seemed bold, but was consistent with his entire system and with all his ideas about creation, in which, I repeat, there is nothing that is not reduced to the conception of being.

4. Divine Government

The Being by essence cannot be conceived as a capricious God, who, after having created the world, abandons it to itself. Everything subsists in God,

conserved and governed by Him under the influence of His Providence; the being by participation continues in existence and develops in virtue of the creative force itself, which extends to the act of conservation and to providential governance. Such are the well-known theses defended by St. Thomas in his theodicy. Here, too, I propose to call attention to the fact that they are nothing but the elaboration and inexorable development of his principal idea of *being.* To do this I have but to summarize some articles of the *Summa Theologica.*

According to St. Thomas, beings would not only not exist if the absolute Being had not created them, but they would fall back into nothingness if they were not conserved in being by God. "Both reason and faith force us to say that creatures are kept in being by God. To make this clear we must consider that a thing is preserved by another in two ways. First, indirectly and through something else (*per accidens*); thus a person is said to preserve anything by removing the cause of its corruption, as a man may be said to preserve a child whom he guards from falling into the fire. In this way God preserves some things, but not all, for there are some things of such a nature that nothing can corrupt them, so that it is not necessary to keep them from corruption. Secondly, a thing is said to preserve an-

other directly and in itself, namely, when what is preserved depends on the preserver in such a way that it cannot exist without him. In this manner all creatures need to be preserved by God. *For the being of every creature depends on God, so that not for a moment could it subsist, but would fall into nothingness, were it not kept in being by the operation of the divine power.*"

Such is the thesis, stated in terms of *being.* The proof, too, is developed along the same lines:

"Every effect depends on its cause, so far as it is its cause. But we must observe that an agent may be the cause of the *becoming* of its effect, not directly of its *being.* This may be seen both in artificial and in natural things: for the builder causes the house in its *becoming,* but he is not the direct cause of its *being.* For it is clear that the *being* of the house is the result of its form, which consists in the putting together and arrangement of the materials, and results from the natural qualities of certain things. . . . A builder constructs a house by making use of cement, stones, and wood, . . . and the *being* of a house depends on the nature of these materials, just as its becoming depends on the action of the builder. The same principle applies to natural things. . . .

"Therefore as the *becoming,* the production of a thing cannot continue when that action of the agent

ceases which causes the *becoming* of the effect, so neither can the *being* of a thing continue after that action of the agent has ceased, which is the cause of the effect, not only in *becoming* but also in *being*. . . . Every creature may be compared to God as the air to the sun which enlightens it. For as the sun possesses light by its nature, and as the air is enlightened by having the sun's nature, so God alone is Being by virtue of His own essence, since His essence is His existence, whereas every creature has being by participation" (*Summa Theologica,* Ia, qu. 104, art. 1).

It is clear, then, that St. Thomas infers the divine conservation of the world and of all created things from the analysis of *being*. It is equally evident that another consequence of his initial standpoint is that other Thomistic doctrine of the co-operation of God with all free and non-free actions of His creatures. "Because in all things God Himself is properly the cause of the very being which is innermost in all things, it follows that God works intimately in every thing" (qu. 105, art. 5). And, adds St. Thomas (Ia, qu. 83 art. 1), inasmuch as God operates in each being according to the nature of this same being, His co-operation with the actions of creatures does not hinder certain human acts from being free; on the contrary, it is precisely this that makes them free. And so even the question of

the possibility of reconciling divine concurrence with human freedom is solved by St. Thomas in the light of *being*,—not abstract, but taken concretely in its true reality.

I translate another article of the *Summa Theologica* (Ia, qu. 22, art. 2) for the purpose of showing how the same procedure was adopted by St. Thomas in his teaching on Providence: "We must say that all things are subject to Divine Providence, not only in general, but even in their own individual selves. This is clear, for since every agent acts for an end, the arrangement of effects towards that end extends as far as the causality of the first agent extends. When it happens that in the effects of an agent something takes place which has no reference to the end, this is due to the fact that this effect comes from a cause other than, and outside the intention of, the agent. But the causality of God, who is the first agent, *extends to all being,* not only as to the constituent principles of species, but also as to the individualizing principles, not only of things subject to corruption, but also of things not so subject. Hence all things that exist in whatsoever manner are necessarily directed by God towards some end, as the Apostle says: *Those that are, are ordained of God* (Rom. XIII, 1). Since, therefore, the Providence of God is nothing less than the fixed plan of things towards an end (*ratio*

ordinis rerum in finem), it necessarily follows that all things, *inasmuch as they participate being*, must likewise be subject to Divine Providence." This Providence, he adds in article 4, "imposes necessity upon some things, not upon all, as some formerly believed. For to Providence it belongs to order things towards an end. After the Divine Goodness, which is an extrinsic end to all things, the principle good in things themselves is the perfection of the universe; and this would not be, were not *all grades of being* found in things. Whence it pertains to Divine Providence to produce every grade of being. So it has prepared necessary causes for some things, so that they happen of necessity; for others contingent causes, that they may happen by contingence (freely), according to the disposition of their proximate causes."

In Divine Providence, then, everything is reduced to being. He who provides is Being. The object of Providence are beings. The reason for Providence is the dependence of beings on Being as to their being. The manner in which Providence works corresponds to the nature of the beings themselves. The government of God, by means of which His world-plan is actualized, if not immediate,—inasmuch as it is realized through intermediate created causes, with Him governing the lower by means of the higher,—has, nevertheless, in its final

analysis, absolute Being as its alpha and omega, even though the intermediate letters are placed by creatures. The whole Christian theodicy, which had already found worthy exponents among the Fathers, is thus summed up by St. Thomas from his single viewpoint.

CHAPTER IV

BEING IN THE OTHER PARTS OF THOMISTIC PHILOSOPHY

Not only metaphysics, but logic, psychology, ethics, and all other parts of the philosophy of St. Thomas are a synthesis inspired by the idea of *being*. I shall restrict myself to brief indications, as I trust that the extended discussion of Thomistic theodicy and its reduction to a single idea has offered sufficient proof of my thesis.

1. Logic

Beginning with logic, whose subject-matter is the *ens rationis*,—being of the mind (here, too, we always meet with *being*),—it is well-known that Aquinas, following Aristotle, distinguished three operations of our mind: *simplex apprehensio, iudicium, ratiocinium*,—idea, judgment, reasoning.

"The essence of the idea as such," in the very apposite words of Garrigou-Lagrange, "whether human, angelic, or divine, is to contain the formal object of intelligence, *qua* intelligence (human, an-

gelic, or divine), that is to say, being or reason of being."

In man alone the idea is abstract and universal, as we shall see presently. But this property of the idea in our intelligence is not an essential constituent, but a defect of the human mind. Intelligence as such consists in its relation to being: *obiectum formale intellectus est ens*,—the formal object of the intellect is being, and intelligence reaches nothing except from the viewpoint of being.

While the senses perceive the diverse material elements, the idea mirrors the reason of being of these elements, the *quod quid est*, the *ratio intima proprietatum*,— the innermost reason of these properties. And in us the idea is imperfect, abstract, universal, because our intellect does not embrace the whole being of the thing, but only one aspect, the *quidditas rei materialis abstracta a notis individuantibus*,—the essence of material things as abstracted from the individualizing notes.

Judgment, the second operation of the mind, indicates still better, if possible, that the formal object of the intellect is being. The soul of every judgment is the verb *to be*, which affirms the logical identity of subject and predicate. The verb *to be* tells us that what is designated by the subject and what is designated by the predicate are logically *one and the same being*. And in this manner judgment

reunites and restores to being what abstraction had separated.

By ratiocination, finally, we come to see the extrinsic reason of being of the less known in what is known already.

"If, then, the proper object of the human intellect, *in so far as it is human*, is, as we shall see later, the essence of material things, its formal and adequate object, *in so far as it is intelligence*, is *being* without restriction, and this permits it in a certain manner to know all beings, everything that has a reason of being" (*Summa Theol.*, Ia, qu. 12, art. 4). By simple apprehension man not only perceives the being that surrounds him, but also *what it is* (*quid sit*). By judgment he not only associates sensations and images, but decides whether a thing *is* or *is not* (*an sit*). By reasoning he gives the reason of being of what he affirms or denies (*propter quid*). In each of these three operations,—concludes the author quoted, in his commentary on the logic of St. Thomas,—the object of intelligence is nothing else than being.

2. Psychology

Having established this much, St. Thomas in his psychological doctrines infers therefrom the spirituality and immortality of the soul.

In his *Metaphysics* (l. x, c. III) Aristotle had

described the three degrees of abstraction which are recalled by St. Thomas in his Commentary on the *Metaphysics* (lib. XI, lect. 3).

In the natural sciences we abstract from sensible individual matter, though not from common sensible matter. The chemist prescinds, or abstracts from the particular character of *this* atom of hydrogen, and searches for the properties of the atom of hydrogen in general.

In mathematics we abstract also from common sensible matter and attend only to quantity, continuous and discrete.

In metaphysics abstraction is made from all matter whatsoever, so as to consider being as such, together with its principles.

Our intelligence, therefore, is wholly immaterial, *"est penitus immaterialis,"* concludes St. Thomas in the *Summa Theologica* (Ia, qu. 50, art. 2; q. 75, *passim*), and in *Metaphysics* (lib. I, lect. 1–3; lib. XI, lect. 3, etc.). Though the intellect depends extrinsically on the body, inasmuch as it cannot think without images, it is not intrinsically dependent on any material organ.

We must therefore admit:

(1) that the soul is immaterial, spiritual, because being independent of matter in its operation, it is likewise independent of it in its being;

(2) that the soul is immortal: its being does not

depend on the body, therefore it can exist without the body;

(3) that the soul is created by God (*Summa Theol.,* Ia, qu. 90, art. 2), because, as it does not depend on matter in its *being,* it cannot depend on matter in its *coming into being.*

This most intimate relation between the conception of *being* and the Thomistic psychology, as Garrigou-Lagrange again remarks, is frequently overlooked by Catholic writers. But it is only from this standpoint that we can really get to the bottom of all the teachings of St. Thomas. When, for example, he faces the problem of free-will and does not admit our freedom as regards the good in general and the fullness of being, but recognizes it as to particular goods, that is, as to limited beings, —it is readily seen that he invariably puts and solves the question from the standpoint of being.

3. Ethics

Just as the relations between God and the world appeared to St. Thomas in the light of this idea, so his *ethics,* or the relations of beings with one another and with God, could not but be conceived by him after the same fashion.

For Aquinas there are no value-judgments that are not being-judgments (*i. e.,* existential). His ethics and his metaphysics interpenetrate each other

in the most intimate manner,—a profound connection clearly grasped by Martin Grabmann. Every action is good in the degree in which it partakes of being, that is, in so far as it possesses the requisite perfection; while the lack of this being, of this perfection which is its due, constitutes the concept of moral evil. The object of the will is being under the abstract formality of goodness, just as the object of the intellect is being in so far as true. The will aspires to the good, to Being, never resting satisfied until it has attained to its full possession. Our actions are objectively good or bad, according as we respect or not the gradation or the relations of the various degrees of entity. Thus man must be subordinate to God because participated being is subject to Being by essence. Men among themselves are bound by relations which are always determined by the nature of being, that is, by the human *person* and by dependence on the will of God. Finally, we may make use of other beings if, and in so far as, we do not disturb the order called for by the various degrees of entity. And an act is subjectively good or bad according as we act with the consciousness of such order. Moral evil, sin, is a breach of the order established by the Creator; it consists in not acknowledging in practice and trampling upon the value of beings and their coordination in reference to the supreme Being.

Goodness and virtue, on the contrary, consist in the observance of the order flowing from the nature of being.

In his political teaching Aquinas is far from being aprioristic, but with a keen sense of reality founds his theories on the actualities of human life, so much so that many principles of his philosophy of law and many social and political doctrines are as fresh to-day as ever. On the very nature of man he grounds the origin, the motive, and the necessity of social authority as presented in the father of the family, the head of a community, or the sovereign of a country. In discussing the rights and duties of property he formulates principles that still have the greatest actuality. Well may we ask: to what is due all this richness and depth of ideas? To his constant application of the concept of *being*. To any one who views the systematic construction of St. Thomas as a whole, this concept cannot but appear as one of essential importance.

CHAPTER V

BEING AND THE INTELLECTUALISM OF ST. THOMAS

To-day the term "intellectualism" smacks of disdain and condemnation on the lips of many philosophers. It is often hurled against St. Thomas, as though he had given us a system of empty, static, cold abstractions, wholly inadequate for the richness of reality and history.

At times, however, the word is used to indicate the primacy of thought over action,—and it is in this sense that I use it here, guided by Pierre Rousselot's excellent work on *L'Intellectualisme de Saint-Thomas.* It is the intellect and not the other faculties of the mind by means of which the intellectualist seeks to reach a profound penetration of reality. The intellect alone thinks, and it alone can give us truth. The will, too, and action and life are objects of knowledge, with which they are intrinsically and organically connected; but they cannot usurp the intellectual function, for this is reserved to our rational energies.

It is the aim of this chapter to investigate whether St. Thomas adopted and championed such an intellectualism, to trace its limits, and above all to dwell on our knowledge of the individual and of history in the Thomistic conception,—so as to show how St. Thomas solved all these problems in reference to *being*.

1. St. Thomas the Intellectualist

There is no doubt that St. Thomas asserted the primacy of the intellect.

In his teleological vision of reality he upheld a like primacy in man's last end, in the future life; it was evident that with such a goal to reach, the present life, too, would have to be suffused with the same light.

As in the hypothesis of a purely natural order, the supreme happiness of man would have been intellectual, though not supernatural (*De Anima,* qu. 17–20), so after the elevation of man to a state superior to his nature, the vision of God, the contemplation of infinite Being face to face,—which constitutes the supernatural happiness of Heaven,—is an intellectual act. The essence of beatitude consists in an operation of the intellect; it is through it that the will finds its joy and repose attained in the end (*Summa Theologica,* Ia IIae, qu. 3, art. 4). In the Thomistic system, observes Rousselot, the

intuitive vision, this gracious gift of Heaven, sets the crown of supreme triumph on intellectualism as conceived by St. Thomas. Paradise is the victory of thought. Being in its infinite grandeur is seen intuitively. This knowledge makes us eternally happy, because now we no longer strain towards something not possessed (which causes the sense of privation and pain), but have the tranquil possession, the immobile act, the full repose. In the view of St. Thomas beatitude cannot consist in an act of the will, where Scotus placed it. For the will is an appetitive force, which tends towards an object; and in so far as it tends, it is moved, it desires; hence privation and unhappiness. In the intellectual act alone do we have the attainment of the end, possession, perfect joy. And so the intellectualism of St. Thomas is assured even for Paradise.

In this world, of course, knowledge, thought, has an immense value and an indisputable primacy over action and will.

To the mind of St. Thomas the idea, knowledge, is of inestimable worth also in the natural order. Even when there is question of the lowlier sciences, he who despises them, despises humanity (1 *Meteor.*, IV, lib. I.; *De Trinitate* 6, 1). All knowledge in itself is of the genus of things that are good; evil, in so far as it is the object of knowledge, is good

because "it is a good thing to have a knowledge of evil" (*De Veritate,* 2, 5, 4; and 2, 15, 5). If science and art are subject to the moral law as to their *exercise,* they are independent of it as to their *specification.* (*Summa Theologica,* Ia IIae, qu. 21, art. 2, ad 2; qu. 57, art. 3; IIa IIae, qu. 71, art. 3, ad 1; 6 *Ethica,* lib. 4; 1 *Polit.,* lib. 11). The primacy and extrinsic excellence of speculation are invariably affirmed. And in the *Contra Gentiles* (III, cap. 25), after repeated eulogies of thought, St. Thomas proclaims: "The practical arts are ordered to the speculative, and similarly every human operation to intellectual speculation as to an end."

Will and action are not undervalued, but subordinated.

First of all, every really human action is saturated with intellectuality. We are truly men when we strive to act in conformity with our rational nature, by subduing our animal instincts, and impregnating being and action with thought. This victory over the body by means of the mind, this penetration of the idea into the field of practical activity, sums up the entire moral teaching of St. Thomas: man's goodness consists in living according to reason. Then we have the axiom, fundamental in Thomism: *"Nil volitum nisi praecognitum,"*—nothing is willed unless it is first known. Thought goes before the deliberation of the will and before

fulfillment; and the more an action is illumined by the light of thought, the more voluntary and, therefore, the more free it becomes. In commenting on the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans St. Thomas expressly says: "Because intelligence *moves* the will, willing is an effect of knowing." Without intelligence there would be no will. *"Ignoti nulla cupido,"*—men do not desire the unknown. And the whole Thomistic philosophy teaches us to be concerned above all about ideas, about the head. Of little avail is a howling mob or a cackling crowd; it is the idea that counts. It is the idea that rules the world because it guides the will. St. Thomas was so profoundly convinced of this that he did not hesitate to assert that the sacrifices of men of action, of priests having the care of souls, though necessary labors, were less noble than the work of the scholar and the thinker. The former are *"quasi manuales operarii,"*—like manual laborers, the latter are the architects.

The will, after all, is nothing else than the inclination that follows upon intellectual apprehension. It is the intellective appetency, the faculty that *tends* towards the object after it is known. Voluntary operation has, therefore, an essential reference to the intellect.

To be sure, the will in its turn moves the intellect, as our consciousness testifies. Daily the will

bids the intellect to reflect or not to reflect on a given object. But there is a difference not to be overlooked: the intellect moves the will *quoad specificationem actus, i. e.,* by inducing it to the performance of this or that particular action. The will, on the contrary, moves the intellect only *quoad exercitium actus, i. e.,* whether to apply itself or not to the consideration of the object.

This, however, holds good in the domain of action. When there is question of performing an internal or external act, the will intervenes to fulfill a trust of its own, which, however, is well circumscribed. But when truth and the task of cognition are concerned, the intellect alone is competent. The will can and should apply the intellect to the study of truth. It can and should order the necessary moral preparation and the removal of all obstacles that stand in the way of calm and clear vision; and this preparatory phase, to use the words of Plato, calls for all possible fervor, for the whole soul. But the truth is grasped by a purely intellectual act. Appentencies, tendencies, sentiments, will, human instincts, emotion, heart, action,—all these have no cognitive task to fulfill; they are not competent in the domain of knowledge as such. As one does not reason with his feet, so neither does one think with his heart. In the final analysis, it is intellect alone that judges. It will have to take account of

everything else, action included. It may be influenced by passions that will deprive it of the necessary serenity. But it is not the will, nor life, nor action, that can give us truth.[1] On the contrary, to judge of life and of action, thought is necessary; as thought controls the data of sense, so it examines the value of life and action.

Without intelligence, *free-will* itself would be inconceivable. The animal is not free because it cannot judge its own judgment and is ignorant of the reason thereof. Man is free because he has knowledge, and his will is proportioned to his intellection. An object is willed as it is known by the intellect and proposed as desirable; it is loved or shunned if, and in so far as, it is understood to be lovable or undesirable. For this reason we are not free in regard to the good that is presented to the mind as the absolute good, and as lovable under every respect, so that it cannot be judged as being other than such; the universal good calls forth a necessary love, and the will cannot but be carried towards it. Hence all must needs desire happiness,—even the suicide, who seeks peace in death. Nor are we free, as P. Mattiussi well says, when those natural movements of the will take place in us which precede reflection and betoken the apprehension of some object under

[1] Cfr. Heinrich Rickert, *Philosophie des Lebens* (Tübingen, 1922). (Tr.)

the appearance of a pure good, or the lack of attention to defects and contrary qualities. We are free only when we have *freedom of judgment.* Confronted by a good that we apprehend, not as absolute, but as desirable from one viewpoint and undesirable from another, the will can so influence the intellect, that,—when there is question of judging a thing in reference to practice and not speculatively only, —it fixes on this or that judgment. It is not the object, then, that determines the will; nor do the motives bring this about; "instead, it is for the will to determine itself: it may, if it so pleases, consider even the greater good in so far as it is defective and non-compelling (because not absolute), and the objectively inferior good in so far as it is desirable and conducive to well-being. Thus it can choose between two things equally good; it can give preference to the inferior as between two unequal ones, —not precisely because it wishes the inferiority of the one as compared with the other, but because it regards this as the opportune choice." [1]

Here an objection might be raised: If thought guides action, if will presupposes intellect, is it not true, after all, that knowledge is there for the sake of life, and not as an end in itself? Does not the

[1] Cfr. the chapter on Self-determination in *The Problem of Evil and Human Destiny,* Zimmermann-Zybura, St. Louis, 1924. (Tr.)

Summa Theologica teach (IIa IIae, qu. 182, art. 1) that, "though the contemplative life is more excellent in itself, nevertheless under given circumstances the active life is to be preferred because of the demands of the present life; thus also the Philosopher says that philosophizing is better than enriching oneself, though the latter is better for one in need."

But this should not mislead us. Aristotle had announced a twofold programme: "Science for the sake of science" and "Science for the sake of life." In this matter, too, St. Thomas reached a synthesis consonant with Christian thought and frankly intellectualistic.

He does not deny that one must think in order to act, and act well. Quite the contrary. But at the same time he observes that thought and action are not the supreme aim of man here below. His ultimate end is the intuitive vision of God; in other words, it is an intellectual act by means of which we shall have achieved the possession of Being. Faith and reason, grace and natural means, philosophy, theology, practical life, religious, political, and civil activity,—all these must be subordinated to that end. Intelligence, therefore, which is the root of all our activity, is likewise the goal to which our activity leads us. It is the alpha and the omega. Hence we must acknowledge that if by intellectualism one

means the primacy of the intellect, no one was ever more an intellectualist than St. Thomas.

Nor could he be of a different mind who in his *Contra Gentiles* (IV, c. 11) and in numerous passages of his other works describes *being as an ascent toward intelligence,* as a succession of ever higher forms which, through a process gradually leading to an ever greater inwardness, culminates in the intelligent being.

As a matter of fact, from inanimate bodies, where there is nothing but the action of one body upon another, we pass on to plants, in which emanation proceeds from within, inasmuch as they move themselves and not only things external to themselves. For all that, plant life is imperfect because the emanation, even though proceeding from their innermost soul, ends in the flower and the fruit which detach themselves from the tree; the beginning, too, of this emanation, the tree's moisture, is drawn up from the earth by means of the roots. In animals emanation begins from without, from the sense-stimulus, but ends within, in the imagination and the memory. Here the beginning and the end of emanation belong to two different things because no sensitive power can reflect upon itself, and the emanation always takes place from one in the other. Finally, "there is the highest and most perfect grade of life, that

of the intellect, for the intellect turns back upon and can understand itself." Though, as we shall see, there are various grades of intellectual life, intellect always has this characteristic, that its operation is in the highest degree immanent. It is not an extrinsic action; nor is it an immanent action that begins from without and ends outwardly; nor one that begins from without and terminates inwardly: it is an action that has its beginning and end within itself.

Intelligence, therefore, is the highest grade of life; it is a life and what is most perfect in life. Through intelligence we are not only we, but we enrich ourselves. Life means the acquisition of another through a principle of immanence. By living, other beings unite themselves to us: but while in the vegetative life they unite themselves to become detached, while in the sensitive life (*Lib. Sent.,* IV, *Dist.,* 49, q. 3, art. 5), sense is only superficially united to things, the intellect, on the contrary, *"pertingit usque ad intimam rei quidditatem,"* —reaches down to the innermost essence of being, assimilates all being, and *quodammodo fit omnia,*— in some certain manner becomes all things (*Contra Gentiles,* I, c. 44 ; II, c. 47 and 98; *Dist.,* c. 3, q. 1, art. 4; *Summa Theologica,* Ia, q. 26, art. 2). The intellect is the faculty assimilative of being and the faculty capable of reflecting upon itself and of

understanding itself. And this constitutes the highest perfection of being.

"Being," St. Thomas teaches (*De Anima,* lib. 5), "is twofold, material and immaterial. Through material being every thing is merely what it is; this stone is this stone and nothing more. But through immaterial being, which is ample and as if infinite because not limited by matter, a thing is not only what it is; in some way it is all beings likewise." And elsewhere (3 *Opusc.,* 25, c. 1): "The human soul in some certain manner is everything,—*anima humana quodammodo est omnia.*" There is in it a certain infinity which does not destroy its unity. And it is this intellectuality, this ability to *become all things,* that defines spirit, mind as differing from matter (Cfr. *De Veritate,* I, qu. 14, art. 1; *De Causis,* lib. 18).

The dignity, the worth of a spiritual being, consists precisely in this. We are not only we; we do not only vegetate; we do not only come in superficial contact with our environment: by thought we embrace all things. *Thought, intelligence,*—this is the greatness of spirit, of mind, this the final aim of everything. The true purpose of nature is spirit; nature is an appendage of spirit; the body is there for the soul; material beings are of the nature of means; only intelligent, subsisting beings have the nature of an end. And the ultimate and supreme

end, the beginning of all beings (which are created in so far as they are conceived) is the Being who is identical with His thought.

With such a conception of ontological reality, how could St. Thomas have hesitated for a moment to be an intellectualist?

2. The Limits of Thomistic Intellectualism

While St. Thomas admits the primacy of intelligence, he must not, however, be taken for an idolater of the human intellect and of rational knowledge. His intellectualism has its well-defined limits because for him, as Rousselot has shown, human intelligence is not intelligence as such (*ut sic*), that is to say, perfect intelligence, but rather the last in the series of intelligences.

In the same chapter of the *Contra Gentiles* (IV, c. 2) in which he explains the various grades of life, after singing the praises of intellect, St. Thomas adds: *"Sed in intellectuali vita diversi gradus inveniuntur,"*—there are various grades in intellectual life. There is the human intellect, the angelic intellect, the divine intellect. The first, though able to know itself, takes the beginnings of its knowledge from what is external, and cannot understand without the phantasm, the imagination. The second knows itself by means of itself, but its intellection is not its being. The third reaches perfection because

in God *"non est aliud intelligere et aliud esse,"*—intellect is identical with being.

There are, therefore, profound and radical differences which render the various kinds of intelligence irreducible, also as to the relations between the intelligent being and the intelligible object; for example, while in God mind posits and creates objects, in us the object is known, not created, by the act of thought. "Supremely ridiculous" (2 *Metaph.,* lib. 1) to the mind of St. Thomas was the opinion of Averroës that there was an equality between the human capacity for comprehension and the intelligible in itself (that man could know all that is knowable), because of that oneness of the active intellect in all men which was championed by the Arabian philosopher.

Above human knowledge, then, there can be and there actually are,—according to St. Thomas,—other kinds of knowledge, more perfect. Our soul is the lowest in the series of intelligences and partakes less of intellectual power than the others: *"intellectus animae humanae est infimus in ordine intellectuum"* (*Contra Gentiles,* II, c. 16).

The supreme ideal of intelligence, according to St. Thomas, would be intuition, regarded by the Scholastics as that immediate act of the intellect which lays hold of the innermost truth of a thing with the shining clearness of perfect evidence. Knowing by

way of intuition,—or, as St. Thomas expresses himself, *per intuitum simplicis veritatis,*—consists in the intellectual grasp of being by an immediate knowledge, with an intimate penetration of the real, which is seized in itself, without any process of reasoning.

We have an experience of such intuition in the knowledge of our ego when we return, double on ourselves. It is not a complete intuition because we grasp neither the nature of our being nor its entire history; however, it is an intuitive not a discursive knowledge of our existence, of the existence of our *habits* and our *acts.* By a most simple act of intuition the divine intellect knows all things in the most perfect manner. Therefore, it knows also the individual in himself, in his complex reality, origin, worth. We, on the contrary, as the last in the series of intelligences, have no such faculty here below because our soul, united as it is to the body, can not reach the idea except through the medium of sensations involving space and time. We know by abstracting our concepts from the things of sense, by prescinding from matter, space, and time, and later returning to apply the acquired universal idea to the reality given by sense. What intuition effects by a simple, immobile, comprehensive act, we must accomplish by manifold means: *"quod non potest effici per unum, fiat aliqualiter per plura,"* said

Aristotle (2 *Coel.,* lib. 18). And so what is one in itself,—say, Peter,—our knowledge represents by means of multiplicity (animal, rational, with such and such individual characteristics). While intuition grasps unity in itself, we cannot reach being except by bringing several ideas into connection, that is, *componendo et dividendo.* As the man, we read in *Contra Gentiles* (III, c. 97), who sees that one word alone does not fully express the idea in his mind, multiplies and varies his words so as to explain the idea in many terms, so our manner of knowing expresses what is one and simple by means of diversity and dissimilarity.

The human intellect, then, attains to knowledge:

(1) By way of the *abstract concept,* which does not express the whole of a being, but only one aspect of it. Therefore, the abstract concept does not deform reality. As Mercier writes in his *Critériologie Générale,* "there are in *this* man differentiating notes not comprised in the abstract concept of *man;* but there is nothing in the concept of *man* that is not truly found in *this* man. The abstract concept is *inadequate* to the particular types it represents and of which it is affirmed. The very word *abstraction* points to an operation that does not embrace the whole, but detaches something from the whole. Hence it would be inexact to say that the abstract concept is *not true* to reality, but falsifies it. It

represents things *incompletely,* but it represents them truly." *Abstrahentium non est mendacium,*—abstractions do not lie.

(2) By means of *laws, axioms, principles* having an essential reference to the rational animal, inasmuch as they are products of our own mode of knowing,—the lowest in the order of intelligence. Being exists prior to the laws, and these are but the suitable means for embracing it. Certainly, these laws are valid in the domain of cognition because, even in their universal character, they are laws of being; however, they do not lead to the knowledge of the whole being, but of one side of it only.

(3) By means of *reason* (*ratio*) or the reasoning process. According to St. Thomas, *intellectus* is to be well distinguished from *ratio* and intellective intuition must not be confused with *ratiocinium,* or discursive reasoning. They differ from each other as the perfect and the imperfect, as unity and the multiple, as eternity and time. It is the imperfection of our intellectual knowledge that is the cause of reasoning. *"Rationale est differentia animalis et Deo non convenit nec angelis,"*—the rational differentiates the animal (in man) and is not proper to God and the angels. *"Defectus quidam intellectus est ratiocinium,"*—reasoning is a certain defect of the intellect. *"Necessitas rationis est ex defectu intellectus,"*—reasoning is necessary because of a defect in

the intellect. (Cfr. *Summa Theologica,* IIa IIae, qu. 83, art. 10, ad 2; qu. 49, art. 5. ad 3; I, qu. 58. art. 3; I, qu. 79, art. 9; *Contra Gentiles,* I, c. 67 and 68; 2, 1 *Dist.,* 25, qu. 1, ad 4). After all, the certitude of reasoning depends in the last analysis on intellective intuition: *"certitudo rationis est ex intellectu"* (*Summa Theologica,* IIa IIae, qu. 49, art. 5, ad 2).

(4) By means of *science,*—another indication of the weakness of our intelligence. If the latter were intuitive, there would be no need of *scientia. "Est enim aliquid scientia melius, scilicet intellectus"*—for there is something better than science, namely the intellect or intuition.

For St. Thomas *scientia* is the specific perfection of *ratio.* In the absence of simple and intuitive intellection, it is the best form of speculation available, though it partakes of the defects of *ratio: "omnis scientia essentialiter non est intelligentia,"*—every science essentially is not intelligence, intuition.

In the mind of St. Thomas, *science* has a meaning different from that attached to it by the moderns. For him it is the investigation of the profound causes of being. It does not stop at phenomena, but goes down into the very depths, to the essences. For St. Thomas the scientist is one who knows essences. To speak of science is for him to speak of finality (teleology), precisely because nature and end are identical. By means of wide induction and

repeated ascertainment we reach the definition of a thing, its essential characters, and come to know *what a thing is.* Then, by way of the deductive process, we rise from general principles to laws and scientific systematization. Science, therefore, considers the reason of being in things, their connection, their relations, but is not concerned with individuals. There is no science except of the universal. Science does not give us the whole universe, but a logical skeleton of it, endowed with absolute certainty and perennial validity.

Besides *scientia* there were for St. Thomas the *artes,* such as agriculture and medicine. The arts and systematized industries are not pure speculation; though they can furnish the material for speculative study, they are not reducible to *scientia,* properly so-called, because they are not interested in *quidditates,* in *what a thing is,* but in the phenomena of sense,—with practical utilization, not knowledge, as their aim.

St. Thomas admitted that there was wide room for hypotheses when, in studying matter, we pass from essence to phenomena with a view of explaining or foreseeing them.

Abstract and universal concepts, principles, reason, science,—such are the means by which the *human* intellect, as differing from other higher intelligences, strives to reach the knowledge of *being.*

Being is in itself what it is and has an ontological reality of its own, independently of the act of our thought or will. Our *knowledge of being* depends on *our being,* limited and imperfect as it is. It was also this distinction that determined the Thomistic theses concerning the knowledge man can have of the individual and of history.

3. St. Thomas and the Knowledge of the Individual and of History

Among the pressing demands of modern philosophy, all athirst for concrete knowledge, one frequently hears a ringing protest against the medieval period on the score that its speculation, teeming with the spirit of Greek intellectualism, had lost all taste and aptitude for the individual and for historical development. The serene and dazzling splendor of pure, fixed, and immutable abstractions diverted attention from the study alike of the world of sense, which was looked upon with disdain, and of development and history.

It is said that the greatest exponent of medieval thought, St. Thomas, as Rousselot points out, not only repeats the old formula that "science has to do with the universal," but "asserts that knowledge of the particular is not a perfection of man's speculative intellect."

No doubt can exist on this point, says Rousselot.

In the *Summa Theologica* (Ia, qu. 12, art. 8, ad 4) St. Thomas teaches that "the natural desire of the rational creature is to know everything that belongs to the perfection of the intellect, that is, the species and genera of things and their reasons. . . . To know the rest, such as particular things and the thoughts and facts connected with them, does not belong to the perfection of the created intellect, nor does its natural desire go out to these things." (Cfr. also IIIa, qu. 2, art. 1). For St. Thomas the particular is excluded from the dominion of scientific certainty because it belongs to the uncertain and indeterminate field of sense and contingence. Even God Himself, whose Providence extends to everything, including particular beings, primarily looks upon the nature, the specific essence, as more noble than the flowing and passing reality.

This, the objection continues, was treasonable to the new breath of life brought by Christianity. With the desire of blending Greek intellectualism with Christian doctrine, St. Thomas completely trampled under foot the teaching of Christ.

In point of fact, Christianity was constantly preoccupied with the individual. The value of every soul, ransomed by the blood of a God, plays an immense part in the Christian conception. The dogma that Providence extends its care to the tiniest insects, to the single birds, to every hair on our head,

was another affirmation of the importance of the individual. Moreover, in Christian dogma and ethics the fall of Adam, the preparation for the Redeemer, the Redemption, the Communion of Saints, evince a concrete, dynamic vision of reality and a vivid and penetrating sense of history.

Quite different was the *abstractive* and *static* vision of the universe. According to St. Thomas there is an essential order in the harmonious series of the species, *per se*. But among the individuals of the same species there is but an accidental succession, holding no interest for the mind. The pre-eminence of the quidditative concept imposed on St. Thomas a static conception of the world. A subtle contemplator of the invisible and of essences, he lost interest in the world of sound and color and in the course of history,—matters which constitute the great preoccupation of modern mentality. Such, briefly, is the indictment brought against Thomism from many sides to-day.

I do not wish to enter here upon a critical examination of contemporary currents of philosophy, but shall confine myself to the exposition of the thought of St. Thomas concerning the idea of being.

Aquinas never denied that the better kind of knowledge would be that of the concrete individual, not of the abstract universal. *"Cognoscere singu-*

laria pertinet ad perfectionem nostram,"—to know the singular is part of our perfection, he says in his *Summa Theologica* (Ia, qu. 14, art. 11). Intuitive knowledge, the *intuitus* that has a most complete and immediate perception of being and concentrate all the various determinations of the object in its indivisible unity, is, in his opinion, the better form of knowledge. And God, as he teaches in *Contra Gentiles* (I, c. 65), knows individual things in this manner. *"Deus cognoscit res alias a se, non solum in universali, sed etiam in singulari,"*—God knows not only the essence in a universal manner, but the principles that constitute this determinate essence as it exists in the individual; hence He knows this matter, this form, these individualizing notes.

Yet, we know but too well that our cognition is not as perfect as the divine: and the reason of this is to be found in our nature.

In the view of St. Thomas, man, on the one hand, is a soul united to the body as that body's form, on the other, material things have matter as their principle of individuation. Because of these conditions of fact, it is impossible for the intellect to apprehend the singular, the individual, directly: *"impossibile est singulare ab intellectu apprehendi directe."*

Our knowledge begins with the senses, which give us the singular, the phantasm or imagination-image;

this is always individual. The intellect, in elaborating this sensory datum, abstracts, prescinds from individual matter and grasps the form, which is not the principle of individuation, but can repeat itself, be multiplied an indefinite number of times. For our intellect to reach the individual *directly,* it would have to know what exists in individual matter, *in so far as* it exists in such matter, that is, with its individualizing principles. However, as we have no direct intellectual knowledge of matter, we can directly reach only the universal.

As a result, the abstraction whereby we grasp being is not exhaustive of being itself; we do not lay hold of its singularity, which is undivided from real being and is its intrinsic constitutive determination.

And yet, it is the individual that we wish to reach because it is the true and only reality. How, then, do we go about it? After having taken hold of the particular by sense and imagination, and abstracted the form by prescinding from matter, we again turn our intellect to the imagination-image, the singular of sense, and apply to it the universal of intelligence. And so we say: *Socrates* (this individual given by sense) is a *man* (the universal idea), is *white,* and so on. Unable to apprehend the individual directly, we do so indirectly by uniting the abstract universal to a certain number of accident-perceptions; thus we

obtain a synthesis that gives us what is one with the co-operation of the manifold (*quod non potest fieri per unum, fiat aliqualiter per plura*). This synthesis, though it does not enable us to know the whole of Socrates, helps us to discern the particulars for practical purposes.[1] Hence "we know the singular by a kind of reflection, inasmuch as the intellect, by apprehending its intelligible object, returns to the consideration of its act and of the intelligible species which is the beginning of its operation, and of the origin of that species; and so it comes to the consideration of the phantasms and of the singular which the phantasms represent." In other words, "our intellect can know the singular indirectly, and as it were by a kind of reflection; because, even after abstracting the intelligible species, the intellect, in order to understand, needs to turn to the phantasms in which it understands the intelligible species. . . . Therefore it understands the universal itself directly through the intelligible species, and indirectly the singular represented by the phantasm. And thus it forms the proposition, Socrates is a man" (*Summa Theologica,* Ia, qu. 86, art. 1).

Psychological observation shows this to be con-

[1] On the question of our knowledge of the individual in the Thomistic conception see the various articles in the *Summa Theologica,* Ia, qu. 84, 85, 86; *De Anima,* 20, ad 1 in cont.; *Comment. Sentent.,* IV, dist. 50, qu. 1, art. 3; 7 *Metaph.,* lib. 14, art. 34; *Contra Gentiles,* I, c. 65.

sonant with what always takes place in our cognitive processes. With the senses I perceive a circle or several circles; my intellect conceives the idea of a circle and knows it directly; to have an intellective, and not merely a sensitive knowledge of *this* circle, I must apply the universal idea of a circle to this particular figure. In like manner, I have an intellective knowledge of *this* person, in so far as I know that this individual, perceived by my senses, is a man, white, musical, tall, wise, etc. It is to be noted that in such knowledge the single ideas and their synthesis are such as can readily be repeated of other persons, real or possible: *"Oportet, si singulare definitur, in eius definitione poni aliqua nomina quae multis conveniunt,"*—in the definition of the singular it is necessary to use some terms which are applicable to many (7 *Metaph.*, lib. 14). We are always moving within an indirect knowledge that never grasps *singularity*, but represents the individual in a manner that is incomplete, though practically useful.

To conclude: St. Thomas does not deny that our intellect in its present state knows individual beings. On the contrary, he expressly teaches that we arrive at a knowledge of the individual, not indeed by a direct, but by an *indirect* cognition. And as to the senses, he attributes to them the apprehension of the individual, and this particular apprehension by

the sensitive faculty serves him later to explain the action of the practical intellect, which, acting otherwise than the speculative intellect, does not limit itself to the contemplation of truth, but what it apprehends it directs to action. It is the union of sense and intellect, corresponding to our nature as matter informed by mind, that gives rise to this our special kind of *indirect* knowledge of the individual.

As St. Thomas himself brings out, it is not repugnant for the individual to be intellectually known in so far as it is individual, but in so far as it is material, because intellectually we know nothing except in an immaterial manner (*immaterialiter*) by prescinding from matter and the individualizing notes. Hence the objection that "our intellect understands itself, and yet there is question of something individual," is answered by Aquinas thus: *"Si sit aliquid singulare et immateriale, sicut est intellectus, hoc non repugnat intelligi,"*—the singular that is at the same time immaterial can be known: we have an *intuitive* and *individual* knowledge of the acts of our ego because our soul is spiritual.

Direct sense knowledge of the individual, direct intellective knowledge of the universal, intuitive and individual intellective knowledge of our ego,—such briefly, are the theses of St. Thomas in this matter.

After what has been said it is clear how baseless

is the accusation that St. Thomas undervalues the individual. He would welcome the ability of reaching it intuitively, concretely, directly, as God reaches it; and were he living to-day, he would envy those who claim to have such knowledge. He did but establish that, in the present condition of things, our intellect has not got this ability, and he believed that his opponents had no more knowledge of individual beings than he.

The same considerations hold good as to history and the knowledge of the process of becoming.

The importance of this process is not overlooked by St. Thomas. On the contrary, in his *Physics* he makes his own the forceful expression of Aristotle: *"Ignorato motu, ignoratur natura,"*—if movement is ignored, nature is ignored. But his great principle is that "there is nothing to hinder an unchangeable knowledge of changeable things."

God, for example, because not subject to time and embracing with His Being the past, present, and future,—all history,—knows immutably whatever becomes because He sees it in what Boëthius calls the *"tota simul et perfecta possessio,"*—the perfect possession that is whole all at once.

We, too, despite the imperfection of our intellect, can catch the flow of beings with our abstract concepts because in the concrete, individual, and changeable determinations of reality there are some common

reasons, some intelligible forms, some essential notions which are and remain substantially unchangeable, and into which philosophic abstraction resolves the concrete datum. It is quite true that there are beings in the world that are perennially undergoing change. But is not the concept of "change" which I ascertain in all changing things the same? May it not be truly applied to all changes,—past, present, and future, real and possible? Again, in every man I find different individual notes and observe an unceasing development, a perpetual change. But does this do away with the fixed and unchangeable truth that all these human persons, whether taken one by one, or each in himself during the various moments of their *fieri* (becoming), have an identical reason of being, the same *human nature* in virtue of which they are men and not irrational animals? Does the fact that every free act is different and develops successively, contradict the other fact that the notion of a free act, as inferred from real and changeable actions, is fixed and immutable?

Of course, by such an abstractive process I do not succeed in getting history, change, phenomenal being, in all its rich complexity: here, too, I have recourse to the intuition of my Ego and of my soul, to the help of the senses, to judgment, and so on. Here too, *"quod non potest fieri per unum, fiat aliqualiter*

per plura." Our inability to know reality perfectly destroys none of its characteristic notes.

Therefore, two points of view must be carefully distinguished in the teaching of St. Thomas: the ontological and the logical, the object known and the manner of knowing it, the *cognitum* and the *modus cognoscendi.*

As to being in itself, *i. e.,* the ontological reality, St. Thomas is far from rejecting the teachings of Christianity about person, the human individual, Divine Providence, history, etc. The spirit of Christianity, or, to use Laberthonnière's phrase, *le réalisme chrétien,*—Christian realism,—is by no means opposed to Greek and Thomistic intellectualism in what has reference to being, to the object of knowledge. In the *ontological problem* a follower of Aristotle is not called upon to tread under foot the rights of individuality, or the fact of change, or the historic sense. Quite the contrary. The only difference, if any, between him and a defender of the theory that all is movement ("universal mobilism"), is this: in the various categories of changeable being Thomistic Aristotelianism recognizes a reason of being, an essential principle, which remains substantially identical throughout all accidental changes. But in this there is nothing repugnant to the Christian spirit or to the exigencies of history. If by a static view of the universe is meant a philosophy that discovers

common aspects in the flow of things, then it is clear that such staticism neither rejects the development of things nor contravenes Christianity. This explains how St. Thomas could uphold his theses concerning Divine Providence as directing individuals and history. *"Providentiae ordinem,"* we read in *De Veritate* (5, 4), *"in singularibus ponimus etiam in quantum singularia sunt,"*—the order of Providence holds good in regard to individual beings also in so far as they are individual.

In the logical order this principle prevails: *"cognitum est in cognoscente ad modum cognoscentis,* —the thing known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower,"—*i. e.,* the manner of the knower's being determines the manner of his knowing.

God, the perfect Being, has a perfect knowledge extending to all individuals, to their being and becoming. The divine cognition embraces beings and their history in all their immense richness down to their inmost depths, and their significance in the process of development, characteristic alike of the single individuals and of their totality. And as the actions and manifestations of the single beings are a fruit that grows on the tree of their own nature, as it exists in the concrete, God, concludes St. Thomas, knows the single individuals through their

essence, their species; nor is any other procedure conceivable.

Man, because his nature consists of a soul united as form to a body, has an imperfect knowledge, which, while not false, is far from being complete. His abstractive intellectual cognition, conjoined with the sense-knowledge of the particular, seeks to grasp and understand the individual and history without ever exhausting the object of its study. And the *"naturale desiderium"* of human intelligence, the desire, that is, which we have in so far as we are endowed with *our actual nature,* cannot be different. When we yearn to know the individual and history *directly* and *intuitively*, we strain for a knowledge that surpasses our ability. This yearning is holy, if you will, but it is not natural, not in keeping with what lies in our nature's power.

4. Being and the Knowledge of Being

From all that has been said, the one idea inspiring Thomistic intellectualism and its limits now stands out in all its limpid clearness.

Whoever, like St. Thomas, conceives being as an ontological reality not created by an act of thought or will, but, on the contrary, conceives the act of thought and will as implying and presupposing the

being of him who thinks and wills, cannot confuse these two questions:

(a) the question of being;

(b) the question of the knowledge of being.

Such a distinction would be meaningless in a philosophy which, like the contemporary metaphysics of mind, denies the *being* that is not a creation of thought and admits thought itself purely as an act. But in the system of St. Thomas this distinction was imperative; and, given this point of departure, the inexorable consequences had of necessity to follow.

The intellectualism of St. Thomas consists in viewing intelligence as the highest form of being, whether in God, in whom being is identical with *understanding;* or in created reality, where there is an ascent from *being* to *intelligence;* or in man, whose being and nature depend on his own *intelligence,* which tends to the possession, *i. e.,* the knowledge, of Being.

The limits of Thomistic intellectualism arise from the fact that, while *being* is always individual and (excepting the perfect Being) has a history, our *knowledge of being,* because incomplete, is marked by the characteristics we have described.

Here, too, the whole question concerns *being* and the *knowledge* of being. And all who seek to fathom the intellectualism of St. Thomas without losing

themselves in the labyrinth of theories of knowledge, should never let go of the *Leitfaden* that alone offers guidance and safety, namely, the leading-line of *being*.

CHAPTER VI

BEING IN THE THEOLOGY OF ST. THOMAS (FAITH AND REASON)

When one follows the anxious researches made from the fourth to the thirteenth century into the relations between philosophy and theology, faith and reason, scientific and dogmatic truths, the natural and the supernatural, one is astonished alike at the efforts put forth by the human mind and at the uncertainty of the solutions reached.

What relations exist between philosophic thought and the dogmatic teaching of the Church? This fundamental question took on different aspects with different thinkers, branching out into a thousand other debatable points. Some asked themselves whether it was permissible to apply the results of metaphysical speculation to theology? While opinions differed on this preliminary question, many illustrious theologians maintained that even the most sublime mysteries, such as that of the Most Holy Trinity, could be demonstrated by reason alone. Some claimed the ability to prove only the existence

of this mystery (*an sit*), while others were confident of being able to give the most exhaustive explanation of it, and to answer the question *quomodo sit,* how it is. Some, again, denied to the human mind, endowed with merely natural resources, the power of reaching the inaccessible regions of dogma; others, finally, as against the hardihood of the theological rationalism of the day, outlined a theory of analogy, inasmuch as created things cannot offer a perfect term of comparison for the Creator. Discussion followed hard upon discussion. The famous question whether the same truth can be simultaneously known and believed by the same individual,—*"utrum idem possit esse scitum et creditum,"*—found two solutions. Some held that there was nothing to hinder us from contemplating one and the same truth at once with the eye of rational evidence and with that of faith. Others found this to be a flat contradiction. And this controversy brought keen intellects face to face with doubts as to the very possibility of a *rationabile obsequium,* —a reasonable submission to faith. If faith was demonstrable and demonstrated, they said, one had of course to believe; but in that case the act of faith lost all freedom of assent, and therefore all merit. If on the contrary, no solid and convincing proofs were available, the act of faith did indeed remain free and meritorious, but at the same time

signalized an abdication of the rights of rational thought.

During the whole of this age-long discussion, the two orders—the natural and the supernatural, the rational and the superrational—were frequently confused, with disastrous consequences. Men did not know how to trace clear and precise boundary-lines between metaphysics and dogma, between philosophy and theology. It often happened that the theologian encroached on the territory of the philosopher, and *vice versa.* And if the theologian dared to deny the worth of reason, the philosopher pretended to prove revealed, superrational truths by intrinsic arguments.

The first one to bring together all that was true in the assertions of his predecessors and to blend it into one harmonious conception by means of his principle of *being,* was St. Thomas. He furnished a definitive solution of the problem with the valuable aid and encouragement of his teacher Albert the Great. As Th. Heitz has clearly shown, in the work cited above, Aquinas took up the materials elaborated and prepared by others under many difficulties. He knew how to utilize these materials for the doctrinal construction of his *Summae,* where philosophy and theology, metaphysics and dogma, while remaining formally distinct, concur in one vast synthesis. Henceforth his doctrine on the

relation between faith and reason became classic and official in Catholic teaching.

I

The main currents that preceded the Thomistic synthesis on this point were three:

(a) The first was unable to solve the problem of the relation between metaphysics and dogma owing to an initial error that undid and rendered well nigh impossible every attempt at a solution. I refer to the Augustinian theory of the divine illumination of our minds. If the ray of faith and that of reason are nothing but one direct illumination proceeding from the primal Light, then the edifice of philosophy and that of theology are irradiated in an almost equal manner. There will be a quantitative difference. William of Auvergne said that philosophy "is not a perfect illumination of souls, but may be compared to a feeble light," the while faith is a brilliant luminary. At times, as in the case of Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, we find rational knowledge so conditioned by the illumination that one could not say whether that knowledge is supernatural, or whether revelation is being lowered to the level of reason.

The Augustinian theory of knowledge perforce

weakened the distinction between the domain of revelation and that of reason, reducing it to a question of more or less, without marking any precise limits. This becomes evident when one reads the writings of Hugh of St. Victor. In likeness to reason, "divine grace itself is an illumination; the very gifts [of the Holy Ghost] are lights of the grace which illumines those who partake of it; and every grace comes down from one sole source, and every illumination from one only light, and the rays are many, but the light is one." Other Augustinian writers call all natural knowledge a revelation from God, the first truth in the logical order. These assertions can, of course, be given a mild interpretation, inasmuch as reason,—the *lumen rationis*,—can justify the expression "natural revelation," to be well distinguished from supernatural revelation; but such phrases created confusion and obscurity. It would be interesting to study in the writings of St. Bonaventure how the essential rôle which he assigned to subjective illumination had the effect of making him waver when tracing the practical limits between reason and faith, philosophy and theology, even though his keen mind had noticed the formal principle of the distinction.

The problem to be solved was one of relations. Hence it implied the necessity of first making clear

the implications of the two terms whose relations were to be investigated. It would become possible to conceive the harmony of reason and faith as soon as one knew precisely what was the field of reason and what the domain of faith. Only after knowing how faith and reason differ, could one say how they become united. Instead, the Augustinian school, though defending with might and main the importance of a union between them, overlooked the moment of distinction.

(b) Another tendency too exclusively stressed the rights of faith, forgetting that in a question of relations between *two* different fields, neither of them should be undervalued or neglected.

When, for example, I open the works of St. Peter Damian,—his *De Sancta Simplicitate Scientiae Inflanti Anteponenda* (that holy simplicity is to be preferred to the science that puffs up), and his *De Monachis qui Grammaticam Discere Gestiunt* (on monks who would fain learn grammar),—I meet with an exaggerated aversion to philosophy, which is looked upon as a wisdom that "comes not from on high, but is earthly, animal, diabolical." And in one of his smaller works, Plato and Pythagoras, Euclid and Aristotle are ridiculed with a vengeance: *quaerant peripatetici,"* he says, *"latentem in profundo puteo veritatem,*—let the Aristotelians look for truth

in a deep well . . .," like the rustic in the story, who looked for the moon down there, while it was shining in high heaven.

Peter Damian, the valiant man of action, was not alone. More than two centuries later William of Auxerre feared to apply reasoning of the natural order to theology, just as William of Champeaux, famous for his part in the conflict about universals, had had a holy horror of introducing dialectic processes into theological discussions; when face to face with knotty questions and torturing difficulties, he preferred to answer, simply: "This must be left to the judgment of God."

Among the leading representatives of this tendency are St. Bernard, Lanfranc, and, in a certain sense, St. Anselm of Canterbury, notwithstanding his great merit of having prepared the full flowering of Scholasticism. To be sure, St. Anselm cannot be charged with exaggerations like those mentioned; however, though applying reason to the study of faith, he does not leave the battle-ground delimited by his well-known programme: *"Credo, ut intelligam."*

To interpret this principle correctly, it must be remembered that for the discussion of theological problems in general and for the study of mysteries in particular, St. Anselm required the dispositions of a good will joined to staid habits and a Christian

life. Only after having come to love the faith with a pure heart, can one proceed to study it; only after the *credere* can one pass on to the *intelligere*. But "here," notes Heitz, "*intelligere* does not mean the absolute evidence of the philosopher, but rather the faith of the believer, which, though simple and ingenuous on the threshold of scientific research, becomes enriched by theological conclusions as by illuminations and supplementary revelations,—if the expression is permissible,—come down from on high by means of meditation on the divine mysteries." The *intelligere* of St. Anselm, then, is what we call *theology*,—the elaborate and systematic study of dogma,—not reason, whose relations to faith remained to be examined. Such an examination was not made by him; and it is precisely because he failed to draw a clear-cut distinction between the two orders that some of the theories of St. Anselm sin by excess or by defect.

Finally, while this second current had the merit of throwing light on the subject of faith, and in explaining the matter came to call on reason for an illustration of the datum of revelation, it did not duly reckon with the rôle and the demands of rational knowledge. To use a simile employed by St. Anselm himself, these men were happy in the faith that made them like unto eagles, with their gaze fixed on the midday sun, but too neglectful of the

bats of dialectics, incapable of discussion in the light of day, and then, like Abélard, straying in the darkness of a thousand errors.

(c) This feeble light of reason was given an enthusiastic and almost exclusive preference by another school, which had Averroës for its founder and Siger of Brabant for its foremost representative.

Averroës made his obeisance to the Koran—but with a proviso: when there was a question of a demonstrated truth contradicting the Koran, it was imperative to interpret the latter conformably to philosophy, though the people were to hold to the literal sense. Similarly, Siger of Brabant, though protesting his respect for the teaching of faith, defended divers theses contradicting the fundamental truths of Christianity, and resorted to the subterfuge of the *double-truth* theory.

That religion is of supernatural origin, or that the individual soul is spiritual and immortal was, for the Averroists, *false in philosophy,* because of the principle of circular succession, the eternal repetition of events, and the single active intellect (God) existing in all things; but it was *true in theology and for faith.* This rendered an internal cleavage of the mind inevitable: the mind was called upon to welcome as divinely imposed revelation doctrines that were said to be in sharpest contrast with the results of scientific research; under the pretext

of invariably submitting even to a faith contrary to reason, these men sinned in favor of the latter by that exclusiveness which those of the second current practiced in favor of revealed truth.

Such were the three theories devised in the course of centuries. It cannot be denied that each one contained a considerable portion of truth. The Augustinians were quite right in upholding the harmony between faith and knowledge, between the two rays of the one sun. The Anselmians did not choose a mistaken position when they aligned themselves as the champions of dogma, theology, and the faith. The Averroists were not wholly in the wrong in vindicating the worth of human reason and demanding for it the highest respect.

None of the three theories, however, gave expression to the full truth. The first did not specify in what precisely consists the distinction between faith and reason, philosophy and theology. The others distinguished too much and sacrificed faith in favor of reason or reason for the benefit of faith.

Then came St. Thomas, with the way prepared for him by Albert the Great. In the midst of tendencies so disparate, he furnished a solution for every difficulty, respected every legitimate demand of reason and faith, and so arrived at the definitive doctrine. By tracing the line of demarcation be-

tween metaphysics and dogma, he pointed to the unity in distinction, with that limpid clearness which is the hall-mark of truth.

II

To reach a solution of the problem Thomas Aquinas had no thought whatsoever of dethroning reason or debasing metaphysics. The latter was always regarded by him as the most estimable of all human sciences, and the least of its conquests had more value in his eyes than the greatest certainty in other fields. Besides, it was metaphysics and natural theology (not to be confused with the theology of revealed truth), that mounted up to God, whether from contingent beings to the Being by essence, or by the synthetic, deductive method,—by way of *negation,* excluding every imperfection from God; by way of *affirmation,* attributing to God every essential perfection (*simpliciter simplex*) found in the things that surround us, by way of *transcendence* or *eminence,* which raises the perfections attributed to God to an infinite degree.

The respect, therefore, that is due to reason was not even remotely a matter for discussion; immediate or mediate evidence, compelling assent and generating in us intrinsic certitude of a truth, constituted the light of this domain.

St. Thomas observed, however, that we cannot always exult in the inward joy of such rational evidence concerning truth. There are judgments that leave us in perplexity and make us suspend our assent by *doubt.* There are likewise judgments to which we adhere though we are not quite sure, and which, therefore, do not possess true certainty, but belong to the field of *opinion.* Finally, there are cases where the will determines intelligence to adhere to a proposition, not because the latter is evident, but because it is attested as true by testimonies worthy of respect. In such cases we have *faith.*

Let no one suppose that faith is necessary only for divine things. Quite otherwise. Faith admits as certain a fact or a doctrine when the intellect *does not see* their evidence, but is influenced by some other motive to adhere to them. Thus if an explorer assures me that in the heart of Africa there is a city hitherto unknown, I make an act of faith by believing his words, provided it is evident to me from other sources that he is a serious and trustworthy man. Moreover, adds St. Thomas, social life is made possible to a great extent by this very fact of faith, as St. Augustine had previously declared in his *De Utilitate Credendi.* Education, the school, pedagogy are founded on the principle of Aristotle: *"oportet addiscentem credere,"*—the learner must take things on faith. In the field of natural truths,

too, the ignorant must believe the learned, be he scientist or metaphysician. And every act of faith means an act of homage to him whom one believes: not the evidence of what he says, but submission to his authority, is the formal principle of human faith.

The same holds true of *divine faith.* The truth of faith is not scientific truth; the first is admitted because of the authority of God, the second, because of the intrinsic connection grasped by intuition or reached through demonstration. In divine faith,—as the *Summa Theologica* teaches in phrases that were later incorporated, with slight changes, into a solemn definition of the Vatican Council,—one believes, *"non propter rationem humanam, sed propter auctoritatem divinam,"*—not on account of human reason, but on account of divine authority. And it cannot be admitted that the same truth may be simultaneously *known* and *believed;* that is, considered from the same point of view, it cannot be the object of faith and of knowledge for one and the same mind: *"de eodem secundum idem non potest esse simul in uno homine scientia nec cum opinione nec cum fide, alia et alia tamen ratione."*

To give us a clear idea of what faith is, St. Thomas distinguishes its material object, its formal reason, and its subject.

1. The material object of faith,—that which is

believed,—is not the irrational, but the super-rational, made manifest to us by revelation. This comprises two classes of truths: some which concern God and surpass the faculties of human reason; others which reason, too, could reach. That there are three Persons and one Nature in God is an example of the first class; the existence of a First Cause is an example of the second.

That there is a domain of divine reality above the capacity of our mind appears quite evident. For we rise to the knowledge of God from the things of sense, and these enable us to know that God exists,—*quia est,* not what His substance is,—*quid sit.* Besides, there is a gradation also in intelligences; the angelic intellect is more powerful than ours, and the divine more than that of the Angels. Hence, as it would be silly for a tyro to brand as false the teachings of a philosopher because he cannot understand them, so it would be a much greater folly if a man refused to accept revealed truths because he cannot fathom them with his reason. Besides, are we not ignorant even of many properties of material things? How much greater must be the insufficiency of our reason in regard to the supremely excellent substance of God! (*Contra Gentiles,* I, cap. 3; *Summa Theologica,* Ia, qu. 1).

It was expedient that there should be a Revelation alike of divine truths that surpass reason and of

those which it can discover. If these latter had not been revealed to us, three disadvantages would have resulted: first, but few would come to know them because inferior talents, the cares of practical life, or indolence would debar many from studying them; secondly, even those who attained to a knowledge of these truths would do so only with much time and effort; finally, many would remain in doubt because human speculation is frequently commingled with error. For all these reasons it was befitting that God in his mercy should make provision by revelation also for truths which do not exceed the power of reason, as otherwise only a *few* could acquire them, and that only after a *long time* and with the admixture of *some errors.*

Still more persuasive are the arguments for the truths that exceed our mental powers. It was right that God should reveal them: first, because man had been raised to the supernatural order and must tend to God and to a possession of God that exceeds the estate of our minds; therefore, the revelation of this end was necessary, otherwise its desire and its attainment alike would have been impossible; secondly, by means of revelation we have a more complete and truer knowledge of God; thirdly, we become aware of our littleness and feel the great limitations of our mental endowments; finally, we are urged on to

things immortal and divine (*Contra Gentiles,* I, cap. 4 et 5; *Summa Theologica,* Ia, qu. 1).

2. The formal motive of faith, as we have stated, is not the evidence of the truth proposed, but the authority of God, who is the first truth. Faith does not consist solely in admitting a thing as true; otherwise the devil, too, who admits the Divine Trinity, would be making an act of faith and, therefore, an act of virtue. It consists in giving assent to a truth *in so far as it is revealed by God.* The act of faith, then, is an act of homage to the Deity, and it can be repeated indefinitely. It is a virtue, and it is free because it depends on the will; it is elicited by the intellect, but it is enjoined by an act of free-will.

3. Finally, the subject of faith are not the bare natural faculties. These are elevated and aided by supernatural grace. Hence the formula proposed by St. Thomas as a summary of the act of faith: *credere Deum,*—to believe God and His Revelation, —this is the material object of Faith; *credere Deo,*—to believe on the authority of God's word,—this is the formal object; *credere in Deum,*—to direct our belief to God,—this is the tendency of the intellect moved by the will towards the last end.

But, it may be urged, does this domain of the super-rational really exist?

It does, answers St. Thomas. It is reasonable

and obligatory to believe. Our assent to revealed dogma is far from being an act of levity. Though unable to demonstrate the intrinsic truth of a dogma (otherwise we should no longer have faith, but science), we nevertheless have an abundance of arguments to prove the fact of revelation and to know its content. These arguments form the *motives of credibility,* leading to the conclusion that ours is a *rationabile obsequium*—a reasonable submission. Thus the act of faith is, on the one hand, reasonable and obligatory, on the other, free and meritorious. The motives of credibility do not give us a scientific knowledge of the dogmas, but they do give us the certainty that God has revealed these dogmas. Thereupon the will, under the gentle movement of grace, urges the intellect to assent,—not, however, according to the greater or less clearness of the proofs, but solely in submission to and by reason of the authority of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Thus far we have described the act of *faith* in its essential difference from the processes of reason.

But the human mind does not rest satisfied with merely cataloguing the teachings of the faith. It arranges them into a system, elaborates and develops them, and draws from them further conclusions as from first and fundamental principles. In this manner faith forms the basis of theology, this true sci-

ence—more speculative than practical—which has its sources in revealed dogmas.

In relation to theology, philosophy has an ancillary function. Philosophy, namely, *est ancilla theologiae* in the following sense: first, in so far as it demonstrates the preambles of faith, such as the existence of God and the fact of revelation; secondly, in so far as by apt analogies and an accurate elaboration it explains faith, illustrates it, and presents its doctrines in a systematic form; thirdly, it solves the objections of adversaries by pointing out their falsity or weakness, by dispelling the alleged contradictions in dogma and mystery, by showing, that is, that the super-rational is not the irrational. Philosophy, then, is the *way* to faith, the means for theological construction, the powerful *defense* of faith itself.

In thus conceiving the relations between theology and metaphysics, the medieval theologian combined the two constructive methods which, in their development in the course of centuries, were destined to give rise to *positive theology* and to *speculative theology:* that is to say, the method of authority, based on Sacred Scripture, which deductively demonstrates that this or that truth is revealed; and the dialectic method that simplifies and develops the truths themselves.

It was, then, not a disdain for philosophical stud-

ies that prompted St. Thomas to regard them as *"quasi famulantes,"* as servants of the theological sciences, but solely his lucid vision of the co-ordination between the activity of *reason* and the realm of *faith*. One and the other were respected by him; but their union was conceived as possible and fertile in results.

III

In this problem, too, the Thomistic synthesis should be analyzed in the light of the idea of *being*, which serves to illuminate the position of the Angelic Doctor also as against the attacks of the naturalism of to-day. Pierre Rousselot understood this when in his *L'Intellectualisme de Saint-Thomas* he observed that the master thought which makes for unity everywhere and combines philosophy and theology in an indissoluble synthesis, may be formulated as follows: "Intelligence is essentially the sense of the real, of being; but it is a sense of the real only because it is a sense of the divine."—"In Scholasticism," he adds, "there is one paramount question,—one might almost say, one single question,—namely, that of the acquisition of being. Only by facing the medieval thinkers from

this side can we come to understand the quality of their thought."

It will be well to make some observations on the relations between metaphysics and theology, as explained by St. Thomas in his commentary on Boëthius' treatise *De Trinitate* and in his *Summa Theologica.*

1. According to the Angelic Doctor, *reason clears the way for faith.* The ways of faith and the ways of reason, though different, are united. Their distinction, their diversity, does not do away with their union. How is this to be understood?

For St. Thomas the intellect is the faculty by which we apprehend being,—*"captatrice de l'être,"* as the French put it, and as we have explained at some length.

However, in the present state of things, our intellect grasps being only through the medium of abstract concepts, which give us but one side, not the whole of reality. Moreover, as a result of the union of soul and body, the proper object of the human intellect are the things of sense, in which it seeks and finds the *quidditas* by abstracting from the individualizing notes. There is for us no special science of immaterial beings; these elude our immediate intuition and we can apprehend their existence only

through their effects. Athirst though we are for reality, for being, we can reach but a small portion of it. The greater part escapes us, and would be denied to us for ever if we had only the abstractive intellect as instrument of cognition.

Revelation throws open a region of being which reason cannot explore. Faith projects a ray of light into a domain which the feeble sight of human intelligence could never discern, may, not even suspect. Considering the lack of intrinsic evidence for the truths proposed to the believer, faith seemingly thrusts us out into the night; but in reality it plunges us into a fruitful darkness, where we may contemplate the starry heavens which we otherwise could not see at all.

Philosophy and dogma alike, metaphysics as well as theology, are at one with each other in this: they are the means for knowing, for grasping being. In the first case we lay hold of it by reason, in the second by faith. One process of acquisition does not exclude the other. In his commentary on Boëthius's *De Trinitate* (qu. 2, art. 3) St. Thomas well says: *"Lumen fidei, quod nobis gratis infunditur, non destruit lumen naturalis cognitionis nobis naturaliter inditum,"*—the light of faith, infused as a gift of grace, does not destroy the light of natural knowledge implanted in us by nature. The supernatural is not the annihilation, but the sublimation, the ele-

vation of the natural. Grace perfects and presupposes nature. The light of faith does not do away with, but acts as a complement to, the light of natural knowledge.

Therefore, when confronted with the double-truth theory, the meek St. Thomas was roused to a holy anger. Writing his treatise *De Unitate Intellectus contra Averroistas* against the *Quaestiones de Anima Intellectiva* of Siger of Brabant, he more than ever made clear his unshakable conviction as to the worth of intelligence and reason, whose laws are the laws of being, and for this reason cannot conflict with the manifestations and supernatural revelations of Being furnished us by faith.

There will come an hour for the human intellect when both reasoning and faith will be as "straw for the burning"; it is that hour when it will attain to the *vision of God,* when in the bliss of contemplating Being as He is in Himself, the intellect will have reached the highest peak toward which, like alpinists, we are laboriously climbing to-day.

Abstractive intellect, faith, beatific vision are three steps that lead us gradually to the possession of *being. Being* is the one and only final object of our intellectual efforts. The diversity of the ways,—each one of which is a continuation of the other,—does not destroy the identity of the longed for goal, *i. e.,* Being.

2. *Reason elaborates the material of faith and constructs the theological system.* This truth was not only asserted, but carried into practice by St. Thomas. The immortal proof of it is his *Summa Theologica,* wherein, starting from the data of revelation, the Dominican Doctor raises up a sacred cathedral, for which metaphysics,—we had better say, the conception of being,—had furnished him the necessary material.

I shall limit myself to the treatise *De Incarnatione,* found in the third part of the *Summa,* which in recent years has had a brilliant commentator in Cardinal Louis Billot (*De Verbo Incarnato: Commentarius in Tertiam Partem S. Thomae*).

Faith teaches that the second Person of the Most Holy Trinity became man to redeem us from sin. Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, is the Man-God. In Him there are two natures and one Person. He suffered and died for us.

Let us touch upon a few points and see how St. Thomas develops this theological treatise with the conception of being as a basis.

Was the Incarnation necessary? It was, if divine justice was to be satisfied in a full and condign manner. Through sin being had offended Being. The gravity of an offense is measured by the dignity of the person offended; but as it was the infinite Being that had been offended, the offense was in a measure

infinite (*quodammodo infinita*). Therefore, an infinite reparation was required of sinful man. The problem seemed insoluble: the finite being cannot make an infinite reparation. The Incarnation solves the difficulty through the reparation of the Man-God which proceeds from a Being of infinite dignity.

But how are we to conceive the Hypostatic Union? In what manner can we admit a Man-God? God, says St. Thomas, is Being by essence. The essence, the nature of God is His very existence. In the creature, on the contrary, the nature or essence does not contain within itself the note of existence, which in no way changes nature, but makes it to subsist. Now God, Being, instead of creating a human nature subsisting by a limited existence proper to it, creates one which, assumed by the Word, subsists by the divine Existence. In Jesus Christ, then, we have two natures, the human and the divine; but only one existence and hence only one person,—the Existence and the Person of God.

If human nature subsists by the existence of the Word, we understand how Jesus Christ could live, suffer, and die as man, and how at the same time His actions and sufferings had an infinite value. And it is by starting from the fact of the Hypostatic Union that St. Thomas solves all the questions of his treatise, which could not be fully understood except by one familiar with Thomistic metaphysics

and with its doctrine of being. The same can be said of the treatise *De Trinitate* and of all the other parts of the *Summa Theologica.*

3. Finally, *reason refutes the objections raised against faith.* This point, too, cannot be made clear without keeping in mind that the laws of rational thought cannot be repudiated by the laws of any reality whatsoever. To him who attempts to find contradictions in dogma, St. Thomas, far from answering with the unhistorical phrase, *credo quia absurdum,* shows that the absurdity does not exist except in our false interpretation of revealed truth. And even when there is question of the dominion of faith, he does not hesitate to use the process of reason and metaphysics, because these, though not perfect because they do not give us the whole of reality, are none the less valid because they are the assured principles of being, of reality.

In the face of such a conception what value can the objections of present-day Rationalism have? When, for example, Idealism alleges that revelation is opposed to reason, we acknowledge that the difficulty is insoluble from the viewpoint of modern philosophy. If our will or our thought creates everything, if there is nothing that is not an act of the thought immanent in us, it is clear that no revelation would be conceivable which would not be a creation of the subject, a manifestation of the sub-

ject to itself. However, if being is not created by us, but only known by us, if in its multiform reality it surpasses our mind, if our intellect is too feeble to acquire it completely and to exhaust it, what contradiction is there between reason and revelation? The latter, far indeed from being in antithesis to the former, cannot but be welcomed by it with delight, and one and the other *sibi mutuam opem ferunt,* are mutually helpful in the attainment of reality, of God, of Being.

It would be quite easy then to show that to the mind of St. Thomas, there was no opposition between truth and truth, between metaphysics and dogma, between nature and grace, because as created reality was for him but a participation of being, so supernatural life could be nothing else than a fuller acquisition of reality, or of Being itself. For the great Doctor, "philosophy was not to be a provisional scaffolding for theology, destined to disappear when the edifice was completed; but (as Heitz expresses himself in a happy simile), it was to be considered rather as a portico, whose columns and main parts are carved in the solid and shining marble of evident certainty. To this portico of philosophy,—though having of itself a sufficient reason of being,—sacred theology adds a temple, making use of its own principles of construction, different from those used by the builders of the portico, and, because of their

relatively obscure certainty, comparable to blocks of rough granite. Thus the original portico of rational knowledge becomes a part of, and the entrance to, the vast sanctuary of Christian wisdom."

Within the elegant portico, resplendent with the beauty of Greek style, and within the vast basilica, there shines in the night of time the bright lamps of Being, lighted respectively by rational thought and by the hand of the revealing God.

When the night will have passed away and the brightness of the eternal day irradiates the minds of men, these lamps will be extinguished and their place taken by the one single intuition of the beatific vision, by means of which we shall exult in the contemplation of Being as He is (*sicuti est*).

CONCLUSION

Being as an ontological reality,—such is the classic thesis of Thomism and of medieval philosophy generally. It was slowly elaborated during a process of continuous ripening. The genius of St. Thomas gave it all the development and finish of which it was susceptible, ensouling with it a world of discoveries and doctrines, and presenting several centuries of profound speculation in the organic unity of a system.

All who wish to penetrate to the very heart of Thomism must ponder the thought of St. Thomas from this point of view, which, in my judgment, is the key to his whole system. Indeed, it would be highly profitable, especially to-day, to insist on this point, for it enables us to evaluate the work of this great thinker in its true meaning. Likewise, if I mistake not, this same idea ought to make its influence felt also in the manuals and publications on Scholastic philosophy. For now and then, in the statement and proof of the various doctrines, they fail to arouse the feeling that these doctrines are as the notes of one musical composition, the cantos

of a single poem, the members of an organic whole, the development of one sole germ rich with an intense vitality.

It is this concept that fixes the *place of St. Thomas*—as compared with that of his predecessors, contemporaries, and successors,—in the history of culture.

Those who went before,—from the very dawn of philosophic investigation down to his time,—now no longer appear to us in a tumult of theories, in a clash of ideas, as a chaotic group of individuals, but as representatives of a continuous preparation, culminating in the formation and magnificent flowering of the two great *Summae* of Aquinas.

It was no mere caprice that led Leo XIII to choose St. Thomas from among his contemporaries and so many distinguished medieval philosophers as *the* teacher of Catholic schools. No one before or after him succeeded in recapitulating ancient and Christian thought in a synthesis so vigorous as that which underlies his *philosophy of being.*

What is more, St. Thomas championed this philosophy with such depth and lucidity as to become its foremost standard-bearer and, therefore, the leading Catholic adversary of modern philosophic speculation, at least as it is being generally interpreted.

From the Middle Ages on, according to an opinion

quite common to-day in well nigh all philosophical schools, philosophy has been one continued effort to strike at and destroy the soul of Thomism. St. Thomas, though he never denied the rights of the subject, could not conceive an act of thought or will without a *being* that thinks and wills; consistently with his conception of being, he did not even dream of placing the center of the universe in an ego living within us, whose only reality would be its activity, and whose activity would not mean an ontological reality. Therefore, all modern and contemporary systems of philosophy declare an implacable war on the Angelic Doctor and his theory of *being*. It is the new conception of the world by Humanism and the Renaissance, which pits against *being* the glorification and divinization of the *subject, i. e.,* man considered in himself or in his relation to nature. It is the *Cogito, ergo sum* of Réné Descartes, with a hint of the oneness of thought and being. It is Spinoza with his immanentistic method in philosophy. It is Berkeley, according to whom being is unthinkable except in relation to the thinking activity. It is Immanuel Kant with his synthesis *a priori,* or the subject that creates being. It is Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel who are inexorable in their desire to obliterate the residues of being in Kantian philosophy, —the *caput mortuum* of the Critiques—so as to reduce all reality to the knowing subject. It is,

not to mention others, the attempt of the post-Hegelian school in Italy, from Spaventa and Jaja to Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile, who seek to pulverize the last unexplained shreds of ontological reality and logically arrive at the thesis of the identification of history and philosophy, nay, of history and the history of philosophy. In short, against the philosophy of *being,* modern philosophy, —as Gentile has well expressed it in his *Teoria Generale del Pensiero come Atto Puro,*—began to affirm "simply, with all discretion, this modest but pressing need, that thought be considered as something, though later, in probing the concept of this need to the bottom, modern philosophy felt the necessity of affirming thought not simply as something, as only an element and, so to speak, an appendage of reality, but rather as the totality or absolute Reality."

It is not my task here to attempt a critical examination of modern thought.[1] Nor do I wish to investigate its contributions to truth and how they can be assimilated by Thomism, according to which

[1] I by no means accept such an interpretation of modern philosophy. As I have begun to show in my work on *L'Anima dell Umanesimo e del Rinascimento* (Milano, Società Editrice "Vita e Pensiero," 1924, Vol. I, pp. 890) and in my essay on *La Storia della Filosofia Moderna e la Neoscolastica Italiana* (*ibid.,* 1925), the speculation developed from the end of the Middle Ages onward is orientated towards *concreteness,* and by this very fact differs from pre-modern thought, which is

also the domain of phenomena and the life of the subject, though not the all, are none the less a reality and belong to *being*. My one intention was to portray with scrupulous fidelity the soul of the Thomistic system, and to show how, as compared with later philosophies, it furnishes the key for the solution of the *fundamental problem* on which depends the future of philosophic thought.

based on *abstraction*. The two processes, far from being mutually exclusive, can and must complement each other. This view is summarized in Fr. Zybura's forthcoming book on *Present-Day Thinkers and the New Scholasticism*.

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